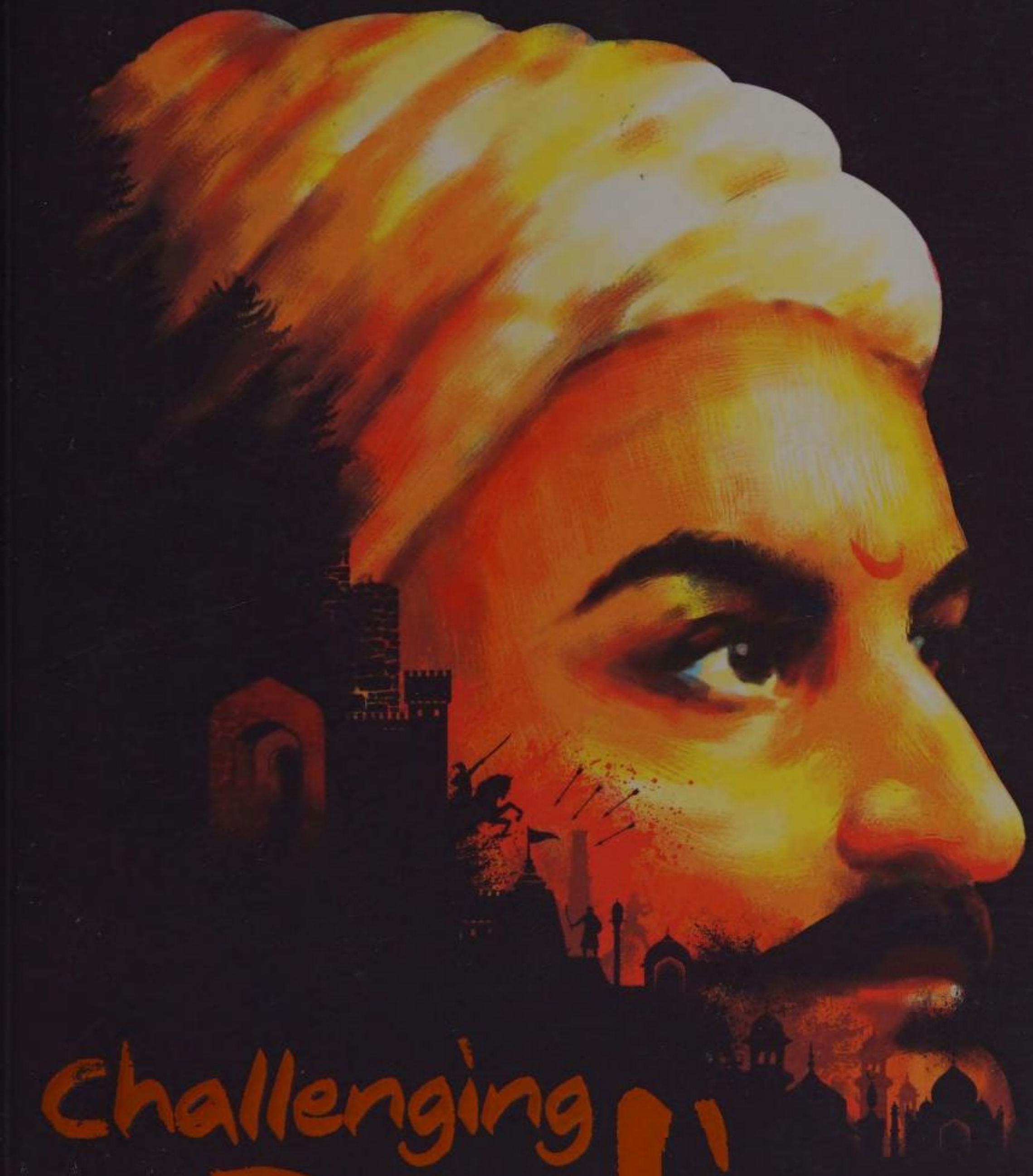
CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI



Challenging Destiny

A BIOGRAPHY

Medha Deshmukh-Bhaskaran

SHOUT
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IT

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR CHALLENGING DESTINY

'To organise and sum up the tireless and valued work of Chhatrapati Shivaji in some pages is an absolutely difficult task … [The author] has taken efforts to bring most of the political aspects of [Shivaji] Maharaj's life and career in this compact work. The book can be recommended to history lovers, history teachers, and history students as a study material too.'

Varsha Muley
Head, Department of History
SIES College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Sion

'This book is and will be of great importance to the lovers of history as well as those who shun the subject … a good and authentic read.'

Sunil Gadgil
Bookseller
Popular Book House, Pune

'*Challenging Destiny* has itself challenged the stereotypic notions of looking towards Shivaji. The pragmatic dogma that had been associated with Shivaji's image has been inspected, scrutinized and reworked in this peculiar biography … [The book has the] unique ability to juxtapose poetry with facts. A must read for young and old, for general readers and academic ones … It's a masterpiece of biography writing.'

Ashutosh Jawadekar
Author and Book Critic

'A well-researched and easy-reading book explaining why the sterling ideals of that great warrior are still relevant even in the 21st century ... We need to study this book to experience how Shivaji could administer justice for all as a true democrat without being dictatorial in an era when none had heard about democracy.'

Vappala Balachandran
Former Special Secretary
Cabinet Secretariat, Govt. of India

'Describes the greatness of Shivaji in very easy and lucid language. The reader-friendly approach is highly commendable.'

Madhav Joshi
Publisher, Param Mitra Publications
(Shivaji His Life and Times by G.B. Mehendale
and other books on Shivaji)

'A comprehensive, never-before-told story of Chhatrapati Shivaji ... intense historical research on this mighty warrior has been expressed through a delightful narrative ... captured Shivaji's glorious tryst with destiny for the layman.'

Vinita Deshmukh
Former Senior Editor, The Indian Express

'Sheds new light upon the life of a great man, who has been written about by numerous authors in Marathi, but seldom in English. Not only will the uninitiated reader find loads of information on one of the greatest kings this country has produced, but even those who are well read in Maratha history will find plenty in it to digest.'

Dr Gautam Pradhan
Author of forthcoming novel on Shivaji

'An informative insight into the history of medieval India … An inspiring book with a legendary example – one can survive against all odds by challenging one's destiny to rise above the skies.'

Padmashree Rao
Anchor and director
Shivrudrache Digvijayi Tandav on Shivaji

'[The author] has stuck to the historical facts and not over-dramatized the story, which is laudable … This biography will become a dependable historical document in a reader-friendly language.'

Devakinandan Sarda
Former President, Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce

'An interesting book on the life of [the] founder of "Hindawi Swarajya" written in modern idiom … a very good addition to the rather few books in English on a hero [like Shivaji].'

Col. Anil Athale
Military historian

'Well researched, comprehensive, and interestingly presented … [The author] has enlivened the historical.'

L. Christopher Coutinho
Educationist

'A well-researched biography … covers in its broad sweep, many of the personalities that strode across 17th century India.'

Thomas Chacko
Author, Without a City Wall

'There are lessons of innovation, strategic thought, military organisation and operational planning that transcend history and time … this book will form a useful addition to military libraries across the country.'

Air Marshal Brijesh D. Jayal (retd.)
AVSM, PVSM
Indian Air Force

Challenging Destiny

Biography- Chhatrapati Shivaji

By

Medha Deshmukh Bhaskaran

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This book is dedicated to all the soldiers who have laid down their lives in the line of duty for our country.

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Preface

My dear readers –

Shivaji was a military genius, an inveterate risk-taker, and the founder of the Maratha Empire, but that is a generic description for any great king. What sets him apart? What makes him relevant today? Shivaji, almost a mythical historical figure, evokes and provokes a wide range of emotions – revered as a demigod, vilified as a rebel and robber, mocked as a mountain rat – his multifaceted personality is difficult to capture.

I believe that his vision for India and his value system was far ahead of his times. Respect and dignity for human life, economic equality, and freedom from religious dogma and doctrine became his operating philosophy. Make no mistake – in his times women and children of enemies were considered portable property, slavery was a profitable and socially acceptable business, and religion was more a weapon of oppression than a path to enlightenment. Shivaji became a fulcrum in the history of modern India, forging its fate, changing its destiny, and setting adrift the most unexpected events. He waged wars, he was a match to his enemies in the arts of deception, deceit, and politics, but his commitment to justice and freedom was unwavering, which is my muse, an inspiration for my book.

After spending fifteen long years studying Mughal-Maratha history through books written by renowned historians and after writing two parts of a historical fiction trilogy on the Shivaji-Aurangzeb conflict, I met Anup from Crossword Bookstores Ltd. We discussed Indian

history and particularly the history of Western India at length. In the midst of our conversation, Anup said earnestly that the history of Western India was incomplete without mentioning Chhatrapati Shivaji, who was not just a Maratha leader, but the leader of our nation because he stood firm against the mighty Mughals as well as other foreign invaders.

There have been very few books that have been written about Shivaji in English and the history of that era in a format that was accessible to everyone. Anup asked me if I could put in words such a biography, based on true history that would interest not just the people of Maharashtra but the entire nation. His other requests were tough – he wanted the biography i.e. non-fiction to read like an interesting story, but it had to be based on true historical facts so that readers could use it as a reference book. And… I said YES!

The task of penning the biography was certainly not easy because it is impossible to show how Shivaji challenged his destiny without knowing where his destiny was headed. It was not going to be possible without writing about a) India's history with regards to Islamic and Portuguese invasions, b) Why Hindu kings of the era failed with repeated consistency, c) The social perils of the *Watandari* and *Jagirdari* system, d) The political interplay between the Mughal Empire of the north ruled by the Sunni Emperors, and the Deccan Sultanates ruled by the Shia Sultans, e) Understanding the military and administrative systems of those superpowers to comprehend how Shivaji used the flaws in those systems to his advantage, and finally, f) The story of Shivaji from his birth to death; all of this in not more than 350 pages!

However, I feel that I was destined to write Shivaji's biography as well as a historical novel (the *Frontiers of Karma* trilogy) based on the Shivaji-Aurangzeb conflict. I am an Indian whose mother-tongue is Marathi, the language in which hundreds of books are written on

Shivaji. As a child, the first books I read were G.N. Dandekar's five Marathi novels on the subject written in literary yet simple language. Since Marathi was my first language I went on to read many more books and then came across the writings of Narhar Kurundkar. Kurundkar (Desai, 1984, p.34), a famous Marathi analyst of history, has said, 'Aurangzeb was not just a fanatic. He was brutal but he was also a fine military strategist and an intelligent statesman. He was not just an insane tyrant or a jihadist; he was a representative of the Islamic invaders. His defeat was their defeat, right from Mahmud of Ghazni. We never understood Aurangzeb and hence we never can understand Shivaji.' I have followed his advice and given Aurangzeb the importance he deserves in this biography as well as in my historical novels.

Many describe Shivaji as a 'rebel' or a 'grand rebel'. A rebel is one who defies authority and undermines an establishment. Against who or what did Shivaji rebel? Against the invaders who had come from Central Asia and beyond and had massacred millions to establish their empires and kingdoms? Shivaji is also called a Great Guerrilla. He might have used a few guerrilla tactics like ambushes, hit and run, sabotaging the enemy's lines of communications, using speed and mobility to attack enemy camps and cavalcades in the early years of his career, but these tactics were used by everyone, including the Mughals and the Sultanates in those times. What is amazing is that he found a major flaw in the war-machinery of the established Empires and the Sultanates, and went on to establish his own Maratha army where chain-of-command reigned supreme. Not to forget, his unique spy and scout network spread across the country. In those times when soldiers fled from the battlefield moments after their king fell, Shivaji's empowered warriors fought for 27 years after his death to keep his dream alive.

Having lived in three places – India, Europe, and the Middle East – life has taught me that there are good as well as bad people irrespective of their religion. At my workplace in these

three regions, I have come across Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and Buddhists to name a few, and even atheists from different nationalities, pretty much from every corner of the world. Many of them eventually became my good friends and some of them even helped me get up and go when I fell. This exposure has given me an unbiased heart to look at history without being judgemental. Having been a freelance health columnist for *Khaleej Times* in the Gulf and *Indian Express* (online) in India has taught me how to do thorough research on a subject – one simply cannot afford to report misinformed or unverified facts when it has to do with people's health and disease prevention!

Moreover, I was born in Ahmednagar, the centre of politics between the Mughal Empire, the Adilshahi Sultanate and the Marathas. My ancestors were the 'Deshmukhs' or the watandars and we still have a small patch of land that has been with us for over a century. Chand Sultana, the famous warrior princess who fought battles with Emperor Akbar's army to protect her Nizamshahi sultanate was born here. It is here that Shahaji (Shivaji's father) intercepted the invading Mughals when Emperor Jahangir ruled the empire. It is near Ahmednagar where Aurangzeb breathed his last. Shivaji's first biographer, a poet laureate Kavindra Paramanand was born in Ahmednagar district. I believe the spirit of our history still hovers in the air of Ahmednagar.

As Shivaji pitted his vision against terrible odds, he became an idea, a concept, and an ethereal inspiration to millions. The farmers of the Deccan who could not meet the eyes of their petty rulers followed him, died for him, and staked their families on a gamble that would daunt even the most courageous person. His battle was a battle of conflicting ideologies, contrasting belief systems, and a sharply different vision of India – the future of the most ancient civilisation was at stake.

'Shivaji was not only the maker of the Maratha nation but also the greatest constructive genius of medieval India. States fall, empires break up, dynasties become extinct but the memory of a true "hero as king" like Shivaji remains an imperishable historical legacy for the entire human race!' (Sarkar, 1955, p.104).

Medha Bhaskaran
5 April 2016

Acknowledgements

Without the people mentioned here this biography would not exist. I am not a historian and hence I needed to refer to different history books, contemplate and also develop an instinct about how to go for the truth. The backbone of this biography is Mr G.B. Mehendale's book *Shivaji, His Life and Times*. There is a reason. A historian, especially one who specialises in ancient Indian history must know how to read Sanskrit because most of the original documents are in Sanskrit. If a historian is a scholar of the relatively modern history of Maharashtra (17th century) then they must know how to read the Modi script[1] of Marathi. Mehendale has studied this script and learnt to read ancient documents in this script. It is almost impossible for someone not familiar with the script to grasp what is written because there are no spaces between words and sentences, most characters (alphabets) look pretty similar, many words are obsolete and some words have taken a new avatar in modern Marathi. In fact, some Persian words were added on and those, most of the time, are written wrongly in these old documents. I picked his reference books because he has acquired the knowledge of the Persian language to decipher the meaning of even those words. Moreover, Mehendale's magnum opus history books are in Marathi as well as in English.

I must also mention Col R.D. Palsokar, who has written intricate details of the Maratha wars in his book *Shivaji The Great Guerrilla*.

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[1] Modi was an official script that was used to write Marathi until the 20th century, after which the Balbodh style of the Devanagari script was promoted as the standard writing system for Marathi.

This book helped me immensely while explaining the war tactics used by the Marathas.

For references on Aurangzeb I have mostly referred to books by Sir Jadunath Sarkar. The editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica write that Sarkar chose Aurangzeb, the last major Mughal emperor, as the object of his life's work. His first book, *India of Aurangzib*, was published in 1901. His five-volume *History of Aurangzib* took 25 years to complete. Sarkar devoted another 25 years to his *Fall of the Mughal Empire,* which was completed in 1950.

Along the way, while writing my historical novel as well as this biography on Shivaji I met many interesting people who are not historians but are equally passionate about history. One of them is Mr Girish Jadhav. I met him when he had organised an exhibition of his vast collection of medieval weapons at Ahmednagar. I had no idea that there were so many kinds of punch daggers, shields, swords, sword handles, spears, war axes, tiger (iron) claws, huge machetes (used for hacking elephant's legs), arrows, head gear, muzzle-loading pistols... the list goes on. Jadhav, who is a direct descendant (14th to be precise) of Shivaji's maternal uncle, Achaloji Jadhav, has collected more than 1,000 weapons. It was he who showed me how the sword was held and used by enacting the stances, while swirling, hitting and parrying. Another such person is Dr Ajit Joshi, a doctorate from the prestigious University Department of Chemical Technology, Mumbai. He has devoted many years of his life researching the subject of Shivaji's escape from Agra and even authored a book titled *Agryahun Sutka* (Escape from Agra) in Marathi. He has guided me while writing my historical novel as well as this biography. He is the one who insisted that I refer to books written by Mehendale.

Anup Jerajani from Crossword Bookstores Ltd. as well as The Write Place Publishing was there for me all through my 'biography' journey, giving me much needed positive energy through text messages. Writing fiction and non-fiction are two different things. While

writing my historical novel, the historical facts could be dramatised by imagination and folklore, but while writing this biography I was left only with hard facts to tell the story. While writing fiction I had a poetic licence to carve out personalities from true characters that existed centuries ago, making them say dialogues, imagining what they must have said. The Write Place gave me an editor who first brought my flying mind to the ground by asking for references for every quote, insisting on page numbers of the reference books. Without her it would have been difficult to transform the initial drafts into a proper manuscript. Niyati Joshi first drew a style file in which she had rules about how to write dates, numbers and which words would be in uppercase and which in italics. She was my first reader and critic with whom I could discuss my doubts and insecurities while writing about a man like Shivaji.

Shivaji's official biography, *Shivabharat* is in Sanskrit. This biographer and poet laureate Kavindra Paramanand. The first biography in Marathi was written by Krishnaji Anant Sabhasad some time between 1694 and 1697. These biographers had the fortune to be with Shivaji on several occasions. Cosme De Garuda wrote the first biography on Shivaji in Portuguese: *Vidae Accoens do famosos Felicissenma Sevage* or 'The Life of the Celebrated Shivaji' in the 18th century. There is a whole list of biographies written on Shivaji in recent times in Marathi. The most popular books in Maharasthra are those written by B.M Purandare. I salute all these authors, some of whom are mentioned in the bibliography.

I bow to late V.K. Rajwade, a well-known scholar of history who dedicated his life visiting hundreds of villages and historical places to gather and compile primary source material in the form of documents and letters (personal and official) related to the history of the Marathas. Without his immense research we would have lost a most precious part of Maratha history. With him I must also mention the names of D.V. Potdar, G.H. Khare, V.S. Bendre, B.G. Paranjpe, and Dr Surendra Nath Sen.

And lastly, but very importantly, a vote of thanks to my family, especially my mom Leela for hovering around me and looking after me while I hit the keyboard, my brother Dr Ashutosh Deshmukh for forever giving me new ideas, my husband Arun for his complete support, team Lara, Ramya and my son Ashwin for making the book promo, and Lara for the fabulous book cover. And of course, I cannot forget Shankar Sable, who made the maps as well as Arvind Singh Jeena for the very stylised sketches you will see in this book.

My very special thanks also to S.V. Pathak library in Vile Parle East, Mumbai for providing me with rare reference books and the librarian Manjiri Vaidya for going out of her way to help me.

Prologue

Why did India need someone to challenge her destiny?

Trouble had been brewing for centuries before Shivaji was born in 1630. The radicalised Muslim invaders high on *jihad* were programmed to strike terror into the hearts of people, which was no longer the means but an end in itself. The Hindu kings of the era were too busy with internal squabbles to bother about protecting their territory from squadrons of Scythians, Huns, Afghans, and Turks hovering about the Indian subcontinent's northern boundaries. What is written in this introduction is just the tip of the iceberg; a glimpse.

'On the eve of Muslim invasions, Hindushahi kingdom extended from Chenab river to Hindukush mountains. The kingdom's last king Jayapala was a brave soldier and a capable ruler. Kashmir was then ruled by the Lohara dynasty. The Pratiharas, who claimed that they were the descendants of Laksmana (brother of Lord Ram Chandra) ruled over Kanauj while the Chandelas ruled the kingdom (famous for Khajuraho) that lay south of Kanauj. The heartland, Delhi was under the Tomar dynasty while the Chauhans were the rivals of Tomar. There were other dynasties like the Chalukyas of Gujarat, the Parmaras of Malwa, the Kalachris of Gorakhpur as well as Tripuri and Palas of Bengal' (Mahajan, 1991, p.27).

Over 900 years before Shivaji's birth, Muhammad Bin Qasim's Arab army defeated Dahir, the Hindu King of Sindh, annexing Sindh to the Caliphate of Damascus. Serious trouble began when more than 600 years before Shivaji was born, Mahmud, a Turk and the Sultan

of a tiny state called Ghazni in eastern Afghanistan, swept across the Indian subcontinent declaring a holy war against idolaters. To begin with, Mahmud, a great warrior with infinite energy had started bothering Jayapala of the Hindushahi dynasty. Jayapala's cavalry of countless elephants had initially managed to crush the marching armies. Then the relentless Mahmud arrived with 50,000 soldiers. Jayapala declared truce, paying heavy ransom while Mahmud took away his sons and grandsons as surety. Within a few years Mahmud and his army returned, stormed, pounded, and seized 70 million coins and 700,000 carts of gold and silver. The bloods of men, women and children entered into every stream, river, well, and lake in and around Kabul, forcing Jayapala to commit suicide out of despair.

The defeat of Jayapala flung open the gates of Hindustan!

Mahmud and his sea of horsemen slaughtered an unsuspecting and unprepared population, plundering city after city, destroying temples and taking away treasures that had been accumulated over centuries. He made it a habit of returning to India each year, looting, attacking, destroying, and plundering the temple cities of Kanauj, Thaneshwar, and Mathura to name a few. Six years after he first invaded India he steered his army towards the famous temple of Somnath that housed a gold chain weighing about 10,000 kilograms. The chain was used to hang a massive gold gong and its sound could be heard across thousands of villages. On that day, about 50,000 worshippers who had gathered to pray were slain, the vaults of the temple were broken and the wealth was taken back to Ghazni. During all his invasions he captured hundreds of thousands of men, women and children to be sold as slaves.

Mahmud had other commercial interests in mind too, for the temple of Somnath was near a port called Veraval, famous for importing Arabian horses. Mahmud wanted to reduce trading activities of the Arab traders, because their loss would be the Ghazni trader's gain. Not a single ruling Hindu dynasty in those times could stop Mahmud and he eventually became a role model for other invaders.

In the 12th century, Muhammad of Ghor, also a Turk ruling the Ghor region in central Afghanistan captured Ghazni and used it as a base to invade Hindustan. Muhammad, a very ambitious and enterprising warrior, along with his large army of 120,000 men defeated Prithviraj Chauhan, the last and greatest ruler of the Chauhan dynasty. It is said that Jai Chandra, the ruler of Kanauj was delighted to see Prithviraj vanquished but he was oblivious to the fact that he too would one day meet the same fate.

Sarkar (1955, p.93) writes, 'Ever since the battle of Tirauri (or Tarain) in 1193, when Prithviraj went down, wave after wave of foreign invaders had swept over the Hindu world through the five centuries without a break. After the fatal day of Talikota (breaking down of the Vijayanagar empire in the south in 1565), no Hindu, even in the more sheltered southern land, had raised his head above the flood of Muslim conquests as a sovereign with a fully independent state under him. Thenceforth the ablest Hindu with all his wealth and power had only been a feudal baron or a mercenary general, under an alien master!' He goes on to say, 'there can be no denying the fact that he (Shivaji) was, as ancient Greeks would have called him, a king among the men – one endowed with the divine gift of a genius.'

After Mohammad of Ghor came the ferocious and merciless Qutubuddin Aibak, the founder of the Delhi Sultanate. Will Durant (1942, p.461) comments, 'Aibak was a normal specimen of his kind, fanatical, ferocious and merciless. His gifts, as a Mohammedan historian tells us, "he was generous, his gifts were bestowed by hundreds of thousands, and his slaughters likewise were by hundreds of thousands." In one victory of this warrior (who had been purchased as a slave), "fifty thousand men came under the collar of slavery! Balban, another Sultan, punished the rebels by crushing them under the feet of elephants. Many a times, he ordered the removal of their skin, stuffing them with straw, and then hanging them from the gates of Delhi.'

The south of India, the Deccan, had remained untouched until the 13th century, perhaps due to the mountains and rivers cutting across geography. It was oblivious to the plight of the north and seemed to revel in the deceptive perception of invincibility. However, at the end of the 13th century, more than three centuries before Shivaji was born, Muslim armies crossed the Vindhya mountain ranges to burst their bubble of safety and to wipe out ancient Hindu dynasties. Yadavas of Devagiri (Dualatabad), Kakatias of Warangal, Pandyas of Madurai, and Hoysalas of Dwarasamudra fell mutely without much resistance.

The question was, why did the invaders succeed time and again?

There are many reasons for it and one was the superior war technology of the Turks; they used iron stirrups and horseshoes for strength and enhancing the mobility of their mounts and their horsemen. The Hindu kings continued to fight with traditional methods, using slow and cumbersome elephants as war-animals. Muslim archers on agile horses could easily target the native warriors who mostly sat on elephants and used swords and spears. According to historical sources, another reason why the Hindu kings failed is that that their military contingents were under feudal lords (like jagirdars and watandars) and not directly under a king, thereby lacking the unity and consistency needed to follow military orders of a single general who could lead them to success. Some historians say that on the eve of the Muslim conquest, the political structure had become weak and patriotism was dead. There was no determination to resist the foreign invaders and only dynastic interests united the people of India. Hindu warriors were reckless in courage but were not cool and calculating. Noblemen had become pleasure seekers, they could not live without women and so they carried their harems even when they went to the front to war.

By this time, the north of India had seen enough. We cannot just blame the invaders, can we? As Mehendale (2011, p.03) writes, 'anybody could have foreseen that the fate of northern India was

going to befall the South, too. Yet, these dynasties were unable to bury old feuds and forge an alliance against their common enemy.'

Three hundred and thirty-five years before Shivaji was born, on 26 February 1295, Alauddin Khilji started his march towards Daulatabad fort near Aurangabad. Alauddin was dangerous; when Mongol inhabitants who had settled in Delhi and had been converted to Islam attempted a rebellion, Alauddin (the conqueror of Chittor) had all the males – about 15,000-30,000 of them – slaughtered in one day. Such a man was advancing towards Daulatabad, which was then called Devagiri, the mountain-of-gods. It was the capital of the Yadavas, the first southern dynasty to fall. The Yadavas were sitting on an enormous treasure hidden in the fort but they were perhaps too busy with ritualistic prayers like *homams*, *abhishekams* and *yagnas* to bother about the marching enemy. Perhaps their scouts were also too preoccupied with collecting firewood and other material for the *yagnas*. It was surprising that nobody had any inkling until the Khilji army arrived in the vicinity. Whatever the reason, it took Alauddin less than a month to defeat the powerful Yadavas and take over one of the strongest forts in the Deccan. It is here that the first invader entering the south got a taste of the Deccan wealth. Khilji collected over 4,000 pieces of silk, 70 kilograms of diamonds, more than 20,000 kilograms of pearls, and 35,000 kilograms of silver, in addition to hundreds of royal women. H.S Sardesai (2002, p.4) puts it pretty bluntly when he says, 'The Hindus of the South seemed to have learnt nothing from the misfortunes of their co-religionists in the North. Equally rich, equally divided and short-sighted, their frantic and fitful resistance was foredoomed to failure.'

Further evidence comes from Durant (1942, p.462), "'No Hindu," says a Moslem historian, "could hold up his head, and in their houses no sign of gold or silver ... or of any superfluity was to be seen. Blows, confinement in the stocks, imprisonment and chains, were all employed to enforce payment." When one of his own advisers protested against this policy, Alauddin answered: "Oh,

Doctor, thou art a learned man, but thou hast no experience; I am an unlettered man, but I have a great deal. Be assured, then, that the Hindus will never become submissive and obedient till they are reduced to poverty.' These rulers were often men of ability, and their followers were gifted with fierce courage and industry; only so can we understand how they could have maintained their rule among a hostile people so overwhelmingly outnumbering them.

The Tughlaqs arrived after the Khiljis. In the year 1326, Mohammad Bin Tughlaq defeated the king of Kampili, a small kingdom on the banks of the Tungabhadra River (the region is part of present-day Karnataka state). Durant (1942, p.461) says, 'this Tughlak acquired the throne by murdering his father, became a great scholar and an elegant writer, dabbled in mathematics, physics and Greek philosophy, surpassed his predecessors in bloodshed and brutality, fed the flesh of a rebel nephew to the rebel's wife and children, ruined the country with reckless inflation, and laid it waste with pillage and murder till the inhabitants fled to the jungle. He killed so many Hindus that, in the words of a Moslem historian, "there was constantly in front of his royal pavilion and his Civil Court a mound of dead bodies and a heap of corpses, while the sweepers and executioners were wearied out by their work of dragging the victims and putting them to death in crowds."'

As per popular legend, Harihara and Bukka, two brothers who happened to be the treasury officials of the kingdom were imprisoned and were forced to convert to Islam. Eventually, they were released and were ordered to govern Kampili. Two hundred and ninety four years before Shivaji was born, in the year 1336, the brothers defied the Tughlaqs, re-converted to Hinduism and laid the foundation of the Vijayanagar Empire at Hampi. In the 14th century, Hassan Bahman Shah marched in from Turkistan and swiftly conquered the northern parts of the Deccan. He, a descendant of the mythical Persian king Kai Bahman named his new state the Bahmani Empire, which was to become a natural enemy of the Vijayanagar Empire.

They would keep fighting bloody battles for two centuries for the fertile land between the Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers, as well as between Krishna and Godavari rivers.

The Deccan had suffered from religious conflict for centuries and it was staring at the future that would see many more centuries reel under the same.

Andrew Boston (2005, p.03) comments in the preface of his book that 'in the year 1406 Ibn Khaltun, a renowned historian, jurist, philosopher and a sociologist formulated a concept axing the world into two. '*Dar al Islam*' (caliphate) or house-of-Islam was the region ruled by Islamic rules and *Dar al Harb* (domain of disbelief) or 'house-of-war' was the region that must be brought under the Islamic rule by doing a religious duty called war or *jihad*. All the Harbis must be put to sword'. In his book *Laws of Islamic Governance*, Al Mawardi, a famous jurist from Baghdad examines the rules pertaining to Harbis who would be treated as *dimmis* (guilty of religious error). This is the origin of 'dimmitude'. The Harbis could live, provided they converted to Islam or made payment in the form of a *jiziyah* tax while mutely taking all the insults and humiliation from the collector of the tax. When *jiziyah* ceased, *jihad* resumed and vice versa.

Some more brutal drama was about to unfold in the 15th and 16th centuries. Vasco da Gama arrived in 1497 on the west coast of India. The Portuguese drove out the Arabs and established their trade. Once the trade flourished and the Masters of Portugal smelt opportunities, they incited the Church. The Jesuit enticed the poor Hindus to convert, first by giving them free rice, followed by employment in their colonies and their military. Countless temples were destroyed and churches were built. Stephan Knapp (2009) comments, 'It was in 1560, (70 years before Shivaji was born), that the king of Portugal sent the first inquisitors (interrogators) to India. Inquisition was established in Goa on the insistent demand of Saint Francis Xavier to King John III. This was the start of the compassionate and merciful Goan Inquisition (a church established by the Catholic government

for searching and punishing the heretics) that tortured and killed many thousands of Indians for merely following their tradition and culture.' The 'Inquisition Chambers' were equipped with torture tools. According to Dellon[2] (1812, p.174), 'innocent' people were subjected to unspeakable tortures to extract 'confessions'. In the 'Queen of Torture', the victim's hands were tied behind his back, which, by means of four cords drawn over pullies at each corner of a lofty room, enabled them to hoist him to the ceiling in an instant and then jerked down. This process was repeated till all his bones were dislocated. Another instrument was something like Smith's anvil fixed in the middle of the floor, with a spike not so sharp at the top. Ropes were attached to all corners of the room – to which the victim's legs and hands were fastened. The victim was then let down with his spine resting on the spike taking all his weight. The third mode of torture was exclusively for women, where matches of tow and pitches were tied to their hands and then set on fire until the flesh burnt.' When the heathens and pagans did not confess despite the torture, they were then subjected to severe punishments like first brutally flogging and then cutting off men's genitals, slowly dismembering the children and tearing women's breasts as well as pulling out foetuses from the wombs with special machines. The relatives were made to watch whose eyelids were sliced off so they could not close their eyes. The rice converts were even more vicious just to show their loyalty.

What was responsible for these bloody wars that went on for centuries, bathing India's soil in blood? Was it 'religion' or was it 'power'? As the famous English poet Percy Shelley writes, 'Power, like a desolating pestilence, Pollutes whate'er it touches.'

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[2] Charles Dellon, a Frenchman, was just 24 when he left France in 1668 and travelled extensively along the west coast of India and later worked as a practicing physician in Daman. In 1674, he was arrested by the Inquisition and sent to Goa to stand trial. There seem to be two principle reasons for Dellon's denunciation to the Inquisition: alleged heresy, and personal jealousy. Dellon attempted suicide several times.

In the 16th century, to the north of Hindustan an era was coming into existence, an Empire was being born. The Mughal Empire would be the greatest Indian empire before British India and would be controlled by one central power, the Emperor. Its seed was sown by Zahir-ud-Din Babur, the eldest son of Umar Sheikh Mirza. In 1495, he had ascended the throne of Farghana (eastern Uzbekistan) and had the dream to conquer central Asia. Babur, the ancestor of Shah Jahan, later invaded north India in 1526, almost a hundred years before Shivaji was born. Babur, a Sunni Muslim, had descended from Timur on his father's side and from Genghis Khan from his mother's, both born conquerors and unscrupulous warriors. Genghis Khan had founded the Mongol Empire by uniting a number of nomadic tribes as parts of China, Korea, Central & Southwest Asia, Eastern Europe, and Russia trembled under the galloping horses of the thousands of horsemen belonging to Genghis Khan, marching forth without a care in the world. They ruthlessly and clinically slaughtered local populations. Just to give an example, in Herat (Afghanistan) and its surrounding districts, 600,000 souls were put to the sword, while in Baghdad the figure of the sordid holocaust rose to 1.6 million.

Genghis Khan was *not* a Muslim; he followed Tengriism, a religion that believed in living in harmony with the surrounding world. Tengriists believe that their existence is sustained by the eternal blue sky and the fertile Mother-Earth. Timur, born more than a century later, dreamt of restoring Genghis's empire, and founded the Timurid dynasty in Central Asia, calling himself the sword-of-Islam and considering himself a *ghazi*, a holy-warrior. He invaded India for slaves and wealth, and slaughtered people from every place he passed. By the time he reached Delhi, he had 100,000 Hindu slaves in his camp. He was wary of revolt by such large numbers and so he nonchalantly and mercilessly ordered all those people to be put to the sword as if they were flies.

Babur was a lethal combination of both his ancestors. His trained-to-kill and war-hardened men, 12,000 in number, drenched the land

around Panipat (in present-day Haryana) with the blood of Ibrahim Lodi's 100,000 soldiers. Ibrahim, an Afghan, the then sultan of Delhi, was defeated. A new page of Indian history was being written, in blood of course, when Babur founded the Mughal dynasty with Delhi as the capital.

In the 16th century, two powerful men of Indian history were born. In the south, it was Krishna Deva Raya – one of the greatest Hindu rulers of the Vijayanagar Empire (reign: 1509–1529) and in the north, Jalaluddin Mohammad Akbar, who took the Mughal empire to another level. The rule of Krishna Deva Raya was marked with military success; his strategy was to change battle plans at the very last moment and lead his men to victory. During his reign, the plunder of Vijayanagar by the Bahmani Empire came to an abrupt end. Akbar's success story is even more amazing. Reigning as the Mughal Emperor from 1556 to 1605, he was the brain behind the huge expansion of the empire. His successors, Jahangir (reign: 1605–1627), Shah Jahan (reign: 1627–1658), and Aurangzeb (reign: 1658–1707) fought countless battles, especially in the Deccan, that eventually turned into full blown wars when Shivaji raised his sword in the middle of the 17th century.

A large number of foreigners had entered India during Muslim invasions. The Mughals, the Khaljis, the Tughlaqs, and the Bahamanis brought in many others who eventually entered the Deccan. By the time Shivaji was born, the Muslim population had people from Persia, Afghan, Abyssinia, Turkey, Bukhara, and Samarkand (Uzbekistan), as well as people called Tartars hailing from Russia and Ukraine to name a few. The ruling classes were mainly Persians, Turks, Afghans and Abyssinians (Africans). The new converts in the Deccan were then called Deccani (Dakani) Muslims. Most of the converts were not regarded as 'equals' by the aristocratic Muslims and were not given any social and economical privileges. The privileged class of Muslims was either the Umaras (nobility or the courtiers) or the Ulama (theologians regarded as the heirs of the Prophet). The high

grade Muslim warriors were given titles such as 'Khan' or 'Khan-i-Khanan' (Khan of the Khans). Khan-i-Khanan and Amir ul-Umara were exclusive titles. There were other titles like Amir or Mir, Mirza and Malik to name a few. For Hindu noblemen, titles like 'Raja', 'Rao' or 'Rai' were commonly given. Other exclusive titles were 'Rai-i-rayan' (king of the kings) and 'Maharaja'. The highest posts and revenue assignments were reserved for these noblemen and they lived in utter luxury, many a times copying their emperors and kings in lavish lifestyles like decorated palaces surrounded by manicured gardens, retinue of slaves, large harems, and a fleet of elephants in their garages!

Wealth and power was followed by competitiveness combined with ambitions and jealousy among the Deccan noblemen. The Afghan and Abyssinian noblemen fought with each other and played politics for posts and titles. Deccani Muslims were not to be left behind. Some of the political high and mighty dreamt of ousting their kings by coup. The kings wanted to checkmate them so they looked at Hindu watandar families with capabilities and chose some of them as noblemen, giving titles and positions. It was at this time that many Marathi-speaking families or the 'Marathas' rose to prominence.

Some other kinds of lucrative trades also arrived with Islamic invasions. According to M.A. Khan (2009, p.314), 'Castration of male captives was performed on an unprecedented scale in order to meet the demands of eunuchs in India's Muslim world. The numbers are staggering. One can just imagine how many young boys and men captured as spoils of war must have succumbed to excessive bleeding during the crude procedure of castration in those days. The 'forced emasculated eunuchs' were used as guards-of-the-harems, service-boys, bodyguards, special troops and as companions. Khan further comments that medieval Muslim historians like Mohammad Ferishtah, Khondamir, Minhaj Siraj and Ziauddin (et al) have recorded stories of infatuation of illustrious Sultans like Mahmud Ghazni, Qutubuddin Aibak and Sikandar Lodi for handsome

young boys. Producing eunuchs on a large scale was rampant in the Mughal Empire and in the Deccan Sultanates too. Khan (2009, p.313) states that some 22,000 individuals were emasculated in 1659 near Hyderabad.

In the 16th and 17th century, while the Mughal Empire was rising in the north, the condition of the Deccan Empires had deteriorated. It started with the Bahamani Empire breaking down into fragments and giving rise to many *shahis* or sultanates. The kingdoms of the Adilshahi, the Nizamshahi, the Qutbshahi, the Bidarshahi, and the Berarshahi had come into existence. The *shahis* of the Deccan were always at war with each other but from the very beginning they always formed an alliance under the Islamic brotherhood when they had to fight against the Vijayanagar Empire.

More than 30 years after Krishna Deva Raya's death, and more than 65 years before Shivaji's birth, in the year 1565, the Deccan Sultanates of Ahmednagar, Berar, Bidar, Bijapur, and Hyderabad formed an alliance, gathering 80,000 infantrymen and 30,000 cavalrymen. Hindu kings thriving at the edges of the Vijayanagar Empire, who begrudged the success of the largest Hindu kingdom, joined the Muslim alliance, thereby giving the requisite muscle power to the sultanates. The Vijayanagar army generals were prepared or so they thought with their 140,000 infantrymen and 10,000 cavalrymen. The battle was fought on the rocky terrain at Talikota on the banks of the Krishna River (in present-day Karnataka). The invading army was decisive and launched an offensive by using cannon fire. It was won by the grand alliance of the sultanates; the last king of Vijayanagar was beheaded and his head was put on display as a trophy. Nearly 100,000 of his subjects were slaughtered and then the plunder started in full swing. The treasure was so huge that every soldier in the allied army became rich in gold, jewels, effects, tents, arms, horses, and slaves. The plunder continued for a good five months as the victors-turned-butchers continued slaying, emptying shops, smashing temples and setting palaces and houses on fire. The magnificent

Vijayanagar was completely ruined – an ominous crowning glory to the Muslim invasions that had started a few centuries ago.

Historians have mulled over the defeat of Vijayanagar for centuries. Some say that the Hindu Empire had lesser number of cavalrymen; some say that their war-generals were aging men who used cumbersome elephants as their mounts, while some say that their infantry used bows made of bamboo. Some historians attribute the victory of the sultanates to the use of crossbows made of metal, the fact that their war generals were younger men who used agile horses as their mounts, and their artillery division was manned by fine gunners from Turkey. The debate may go on but the truth is that it was the beginning of the end of the last and one of the greatest Hindu Empires.

The Deccan that had seen wars and more wars from 13th century onwards, seemed finally coming to terms with its violent past. Eventually, two of the sultanates met their end. In 1574, there was a coup in Berar. In that vulnerable period, it was invaded and conquered by the Nizamshahi. In 1619, Bidar was swallowed by the Adilshahi. To give a rough idea, during Shivaji's time, three Muslim kingdoms survived in the Deccan: Nizamshahi with Ahmednagar (Maharashtra) as its capital, Adilshahi with Bijapur (Karnataka) as its capital, and Qutbshahi or Golconda with Hyderabad (Andhra/Telangana) as its capital. The Deccan could be defined as the entire southern peninsula, or the region between River Narmada in the north and Krishna in the south. The name comes from the Sanskrit *daksina* which means 'south'. The region is delineated by the Western Ghats (mountainous escarpments) on the west, the Nilgiri Hills on the south, the Eastern Ghats on the east, and the Aravalli and Chhota Nagpur hills to the north. This upland is drained by a series of rivers, notably the Godavari, Krishna, Penner, and Cauvery, most of which start near the Arabian Sea and flow eastward to the Bay of Bengal.

'The territorial loss which Vijayanagar suffered after the debacle at Talikota was not significant. But it delivered a severe psychological

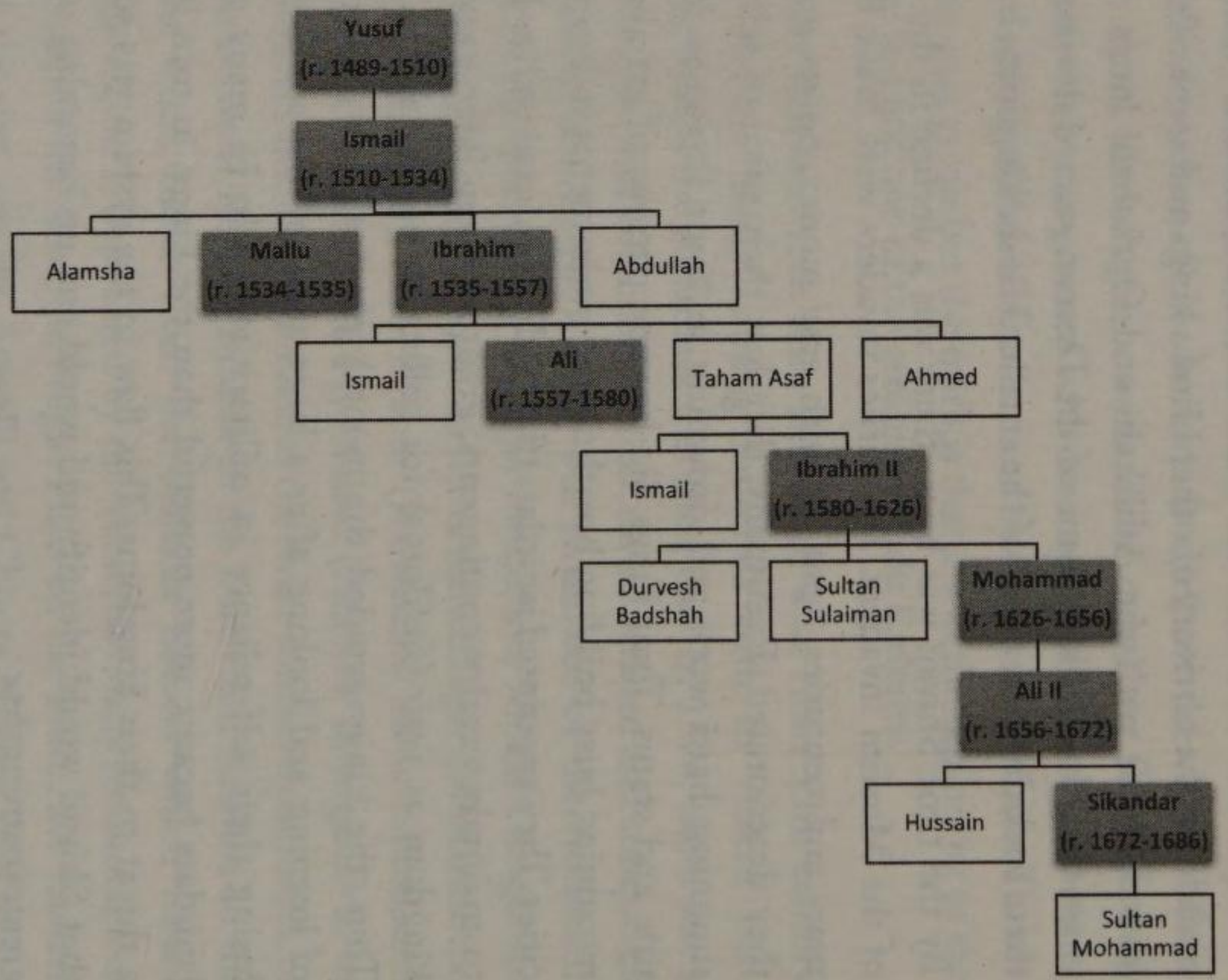
blow to the Hindu Empire. The Emperor's prestige waned, central authority weakened, factionalism grew. The Nayaks, who were regional governors, began to assert their independence. This process culminated in the break-up of the Empire into smaller, squabbling states' (Mehendale, 2011, p.04).

Talikota was a milestone. After Talikota, smaller Hindu kings plundered the territory of other Hindu kings and some of them even joined hands with the Adilshahi and Qutbshahi kings. Over the years the Muslim kingdoms of the Deccan started devouring all of them and, divided, many of the smaller Hindu kingdoms indeed fell.

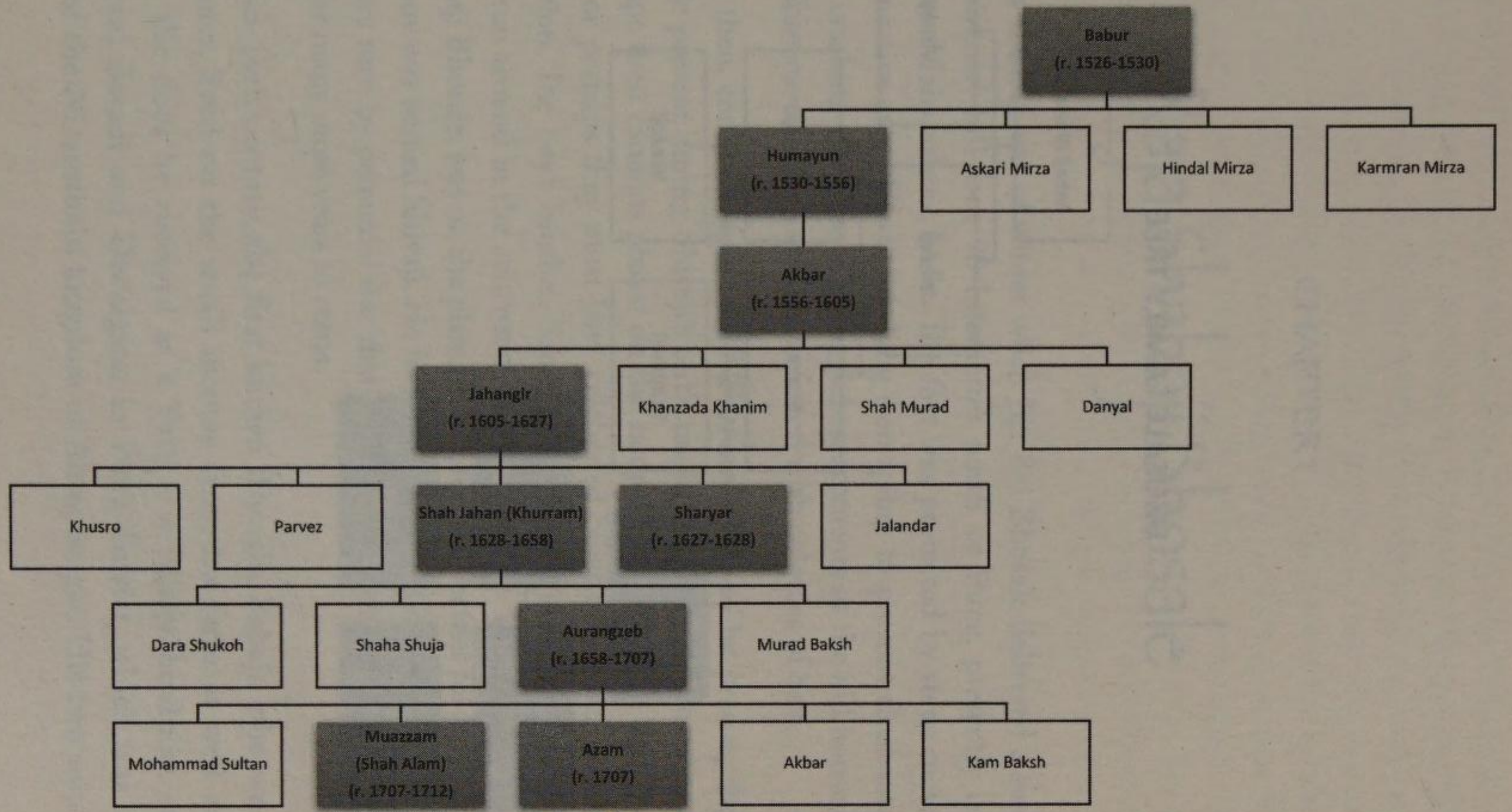
By the time Shivaji was born, there was a decline in the character of the Muslim invaders. The earlier invaders were brave but as the years and centuries went by, with easy money, power and luxury, they deteriorated. Eventually, they lost their spirit of self-reliance, shunning hard work and drowning in court intrigues for power, title and status. Their kings did become patrons of art and culture, remaining busy building breathtaking monuments to beautify their cities. They appointed jagirdars (fief lords; Hindus as well as Muslims) to maintain cavalry contingents, granting them large parts of their kingdom as *jagir* (fiefdoms) for collection of revenue as payment. Thus, the kings avoided the mental, physical, and financial stress of keeping and looking after a large army-of-the-state, eventually losing their self-reliance in military strength. In many cases, the jagirdars became more powerful than the kings, in turn becoming a threat to their kingdoms. This flaw in the system was something that Shivaji would identify and would end up becoming one of his greatest strengths.

The fact remained remained, however, that India's destiny was most definitely heading towards disaster.

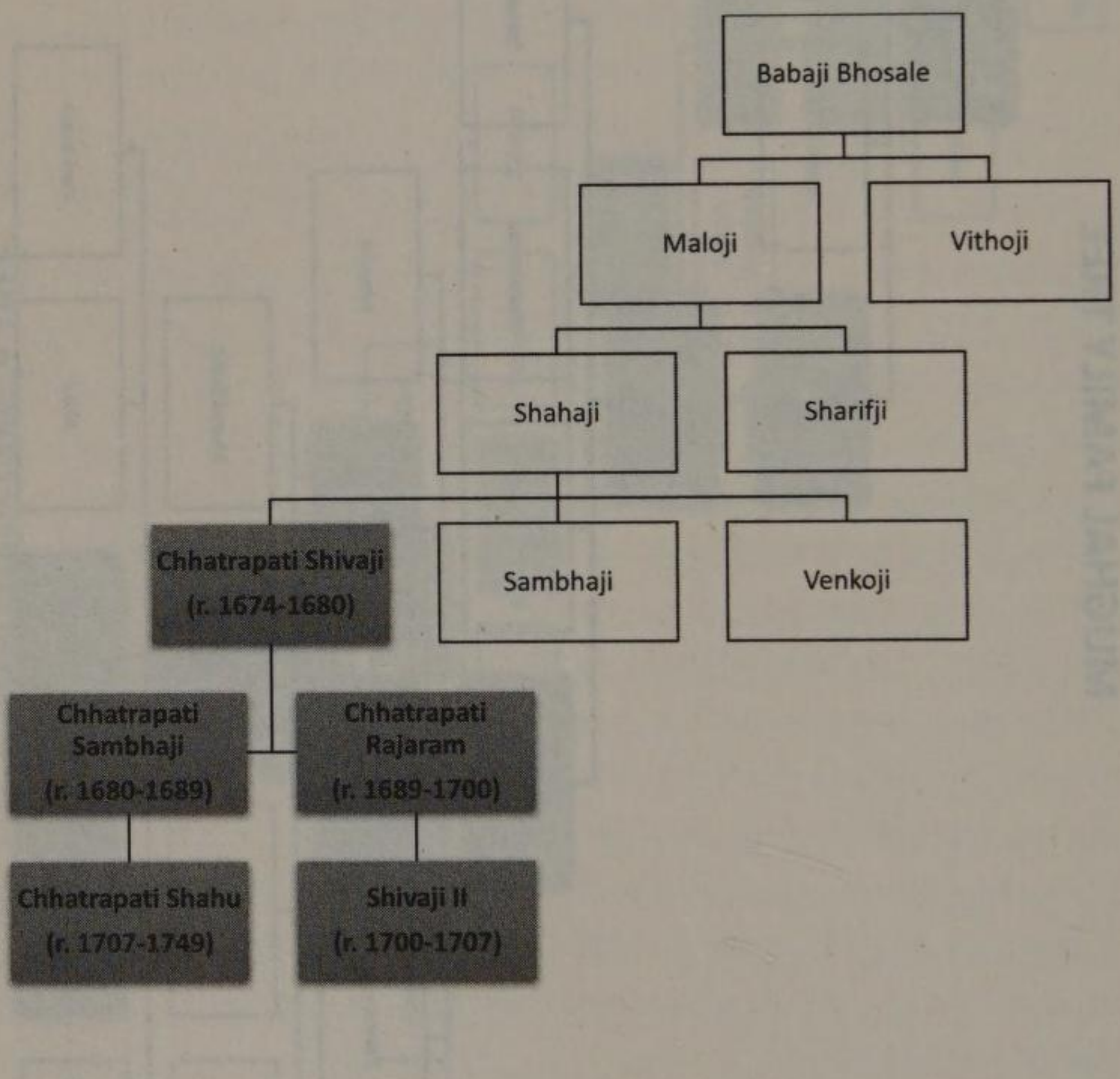
ADILSHAHI FAMILY TREE



MUGHAL FAMILY TREE



BHOSALE FAMILY TREE



CHAPTER 1

Raja Shahaji Bhosale

It was the fag end of winter when Jija Bai Bhosale delivered a son at Shivaneri hill-fort, 90 kilometres north of Pune, presently in western Maharashtra, India. The fort was protected by steep rocks and massive gates filled with long iron spikes to prevent elephants from crashing the gates. The rugged escarpments of the hill housed Buddhist caves, which are now infested with colonies of bats.

Back then, centuries ago, on 19 February 1630 to be precise, the people present during Shivaji's birth might have beaten drums and perhaps fired cannons placed on the ramparts to announce 'it-is-a-boy!' or perhaps they must have celebrated quietly to avoid undue attention. The boy's brother, Sambhaji, who was just seven, might have run around in the courtyard with excitement. The boy's father, Shahaji Bhosale, was on the plains below, fighting battles for survival. The boy was named Shivaji. He had no inkling that he was born in a country torn by perennial war that had lasted for hundreds of years and for many more years to come.

In mid-16th century, the first known Bhosale, Babaji, who was a farmer, lived on the small income from his farm as well as from the dues he received as a Patil – a village headman of Hingani Beradi and Diwalgaon in Pune district, which was a part of the Nizamshahi kingdom of Ahmednagar. His two sons,

Maloji (Shivaji's paternal grandfather) and Vithoji migrated to Ellora at the foothills of Daulatabad. Here, they met Lakhuji Jadhav Rao (Shivaji's maternal grandfather) of Sindkhed, who was a nobleman of prominence in the court of the then Nizam Shah. With Lakhuji's help, the Bhosale brothers joined the Nizamshahi military as cavalry soldiers. Maloji Bhosale proved his mettle as a warrior and rose to become a nobleman in the court of the Nizam Shah. So pleased was the king with Maloji Bhosale that he entrusted large pieces of land around Junnar and Nasik to Maloji as *jagir*. Maloji was a man of great integrity and generosity. He not only maintained a large cavalry but also spent huge amounts of money meant for his personal expenses in building temples, giving alms to the poor and building water-tanks to harvest rain in Satara district in Maharashtra[3]. After Maloji's death, his son, Shahaji (Shivaji's father) too won many battles for the Nizam Shah against the Mughals as well as the Adilshahi kingdom. The regions of Pune, Supe and Indapur were added to his forefather's *jagir*, giving him the right to collect revenue from cultivators of those regions and maintain an army to defend the king in times of war.

Jija Bai (Shivaji's mother) was the daughter of Lakhuji Jadhav, who, apart from being a nobleman, was also the Deshmukh (watandar) of

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[3] Today's Maharashtra, a state situated in central west part of India, has Maharashtra (west) containing Konkan (coast) and Desh (Sahyadri Plateau), Marathwada, and Vidarbha. Various names have been used for Maharashtra in the past. Inscriptions on stone show words like Marhatta, Marhatti, Maharashtri, Maharashtrik, and Maharashtra Dharma. In the 7th century, this region was described as: *The king of Maharashtra Desha is a Kshatriya, His name is Pulakeshi. His subjects are highly educated, there are about more than a hundred residential complexes and more than 5,000 people live off King's alms. There are more than a hundred temples too. Here, people of different sects live happily together* (Kulkarni, 1999, p.12, trans. author). The word Maharashtra was used by many renowned saint poets of the 17th century including Swami Samarth Ramdas and Kavindra Parmanand.

Sindkhed, a town in the Buldhana district of Maharashtra, western India. 'The first place in this historic picture of the past must be assigned to Jija Bai, the mother of Shivaji. She claimed her descend from the ancient Yadav kings of Maharashtra and was the daughter of proudest Maratha jagirdar of the times. The story of her romantic marriage to Shahaji, when they were both children is eminently typical of the times. Her father in an unguarded movement expressed a wish that she could be Shahaji's wife and the pledge was enforced by Shahaji's father, Maloji Raje by a sacrilege which at once showed that Maloji was a man who could hold his own against even the great Jadavrao, commander of twenty thousand horse' (Ranade, 1961, p.28).

Watan means homeland in Arabic but here it means the hereditary right over a job. Watandars were mainly persons who inherited the right to do a certain type of work and earn their livelihood. Agriculture was the main occupation and revenue collection (tax over the produce from farmlands) was the main and the most prestigious work. Everything revolved around agriculture. From time immemorial, the custom of holding hereditary *watans* was practiced in the Deccan. Hundreds of village officers and high government servants were given lands, rights and privileges for a certain service performed. Such grants were known as *watans*. The Patil (village chief) and the Kulkarni (village accountant) were watandars at the village level, while Desais, Deshmukhs, Deshpandes, Deshkulkarnis, etc., were district officers (*paragana* chiefs); they were watandars at the district level. At times, large pieces of tax-free lands were given to them as *inams* (gifts), sometimes along with some share of the government revenue as well, given to them generation after generation. Shivaji's forefathers were such jagirdars or fiefs, also meaning the trustee of the estate.

The system roughly worked like this:

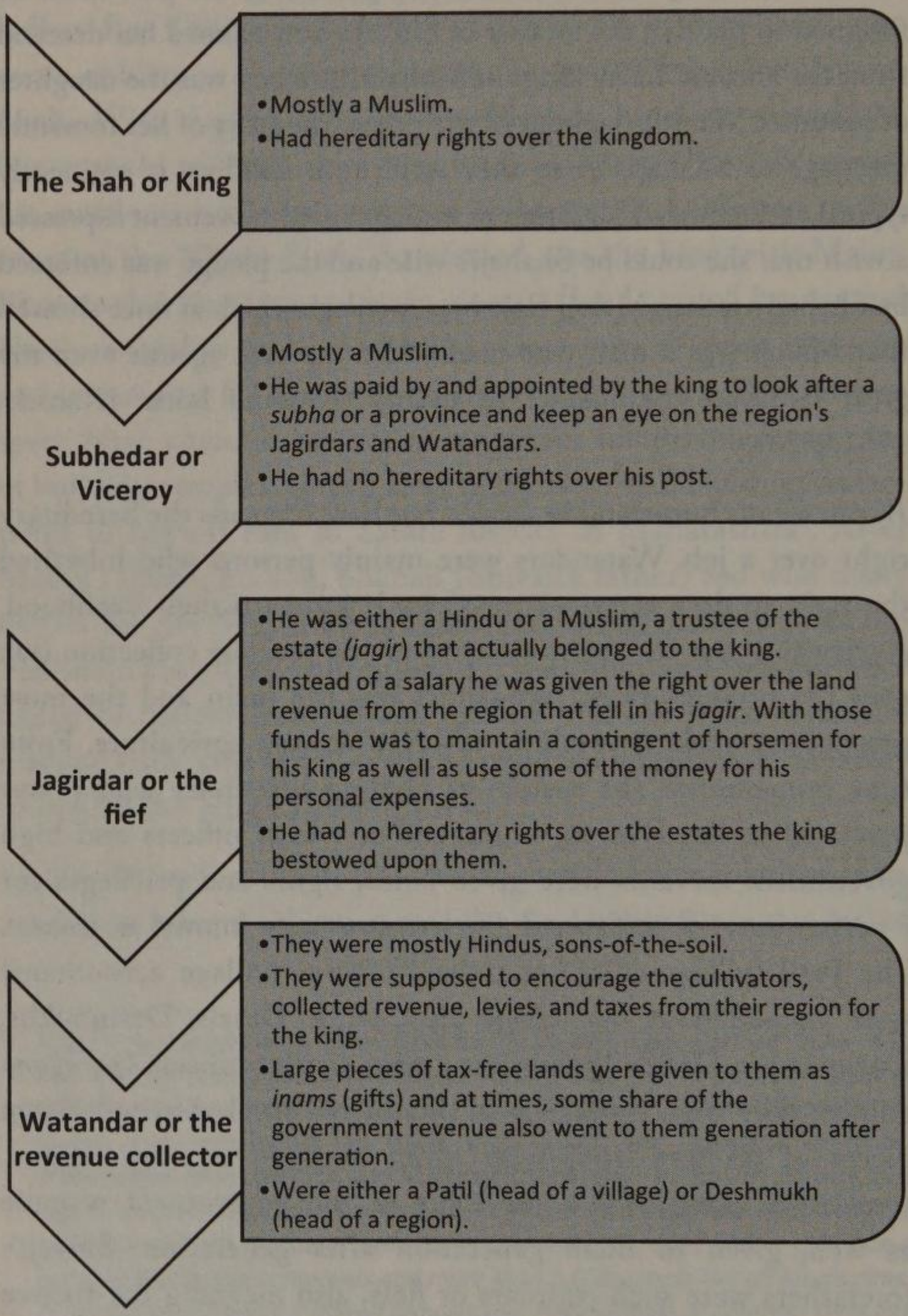
The Shah or King
•Mostly a Muslim.
•Had hereditary rights over the kingdom.
Subhedar or Viceroy
•Mostly a Muslim.
•He was paid by and appointed by the king to look after a *subha* or a province and keep an eye on the region's Jagirdars and Watandars.
•He had no hereditary rights over his post.
Jagirdar or the fief
•He was either a Hindu or a Muslim, a trustee of the estate *(jagir*) that actually belonged to the king.
•Instead of a salary he was given the right over the land revenue from the region that fell in his *jagir*. With those funds he was to maintain a contingent of horsemen for his king as well as use some of the money for his personal expenses.
•He had no hereditary rights over the estates the king bestowed upon them.
Watandar or the revenue collector
•They were mostly Hindus, sons-of-the-soil.
•They were supposed to encourage the cultivators, collected revenue, levies, and taxes from their region for the king.
•Large pieces of tax-free lands were given to them as *inams* (gifts) and at times, some share of the government revenue also went to them generation after generation.
•Were either a Patil (head of a village) or Deshmukh (head of a region).

Fig. 1. The Mughals' Watandari *System*

Scholars had recognised the theoretical '*varna* system', under which groups were classified as Brahmin (priest or intellectual), Kshatriya (warrior, king), Vaishya (businessmen or trader), and Shudra (farmers and village helpers or *Balute*). The '*varna* system' simply brought an order to the performance of economic functions. This might have enabled the Indian society to be formed out of various and even discordant elements with the minimum use of violence, but once developed, it tended to grow into a narrow orthodoxy where caste bonds grew tighter, suffocating the society that eventually lost the sense of unity, giving rise to a breach of human rights and caste-related discrimination. People at lower levels of the caste hierarchy were forbidden by the higher castes to enter places of worship, to learn Sanskrit, study and even draw water from public wells, or wear shoes in the presence of the higher castes.

Much before Shivaji's era and after Marathi[4] language came into existence, the words Mahalesh (Mahalacho), Marhatt, Marhati, Maharashtri, Maharashtric, Maharratta, Marhatta, and Maratha[5] were frequently used to describe the region where Marathi was spoken. During Shivaji's times when the Marathas invaded the south and after Shivaji (during the Peshwas' rule, who were Brahmins) when the Marathas invaded the north as well as the south, the word 'Maratha' was used for troopers who spoke Marathi. So when one referred to the 'Maratha Army' it included everyone: the Kunbis, the Brahmins, the Vaishyas and the Balutes as well as the tribals (Kulkarni, 1999, pp.11-15, trans. Author).

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4 The origins of Marathi are found in Pali, Magadhi, Ardhamagadhi and Paishachi languages. It started blooming between the 5th and 7th centuries and some Marathi words are found in stone inscriptions of those centuries. However, the first sentence in Marathi is found in stone inscriptions in the year 983 AD at Shravanabelagola, in present day Karnataka (Kulkarni, 1999, p.14, trans. Author).

5 Maratha signifies Marathi-speaking but the word has been used to indicate region too. Both words – Maharashtra and Maratha – seem to have similar meanings in certain writings. In the 13th century, Saint Dyaneshwar has used the term Maratha Desh for Maharashtra. But Maharashtra Rajya – or *swaraj* – was a gift to us from Shivaji (Kulkarni, 1999, p.14, trans. Author).

As James Grant Duff (1826, p.13) writes, 'From what has been said of the most conspicuous classes of the inhabitants in Maharashtra, that the name Mahratta is applicable in some degree to all of them, when spoken of in contradistinction to men of other countries but amongst themselves a Mahratta Brahmin will carefully distinguish himself from a Mahratta (peasant). That term, though extended to the Kunbis, or cultivators, is, in strictness, confined to the military families of the country, many of whom claim a doubtful but not improbable descent from the Rajputs.'

The *Baluta* System was also prevalent in the villages during this time. Under this system, a fixed annual share of each peasant family's farm or garden produce, called '*baluta*', was permanently assigned for the subsistence of about 12 village servants and artisans called 'Balutadars'. They were not employed by the individual peasant's families but by the village as a whole and were expected to serve the villagers whenever required in their respective capacities fixed by their castes. All of them, in a way, were watandars and had a hereditary right to their occupations and the area where they practiced their craft. For example, a village barber would inherit his 'right' to serve the same village from his father and no other barber would be allowed to operate in that village. Some of them had tax-free lands given to them for their maintenance. It is unbelievable but true that everyone was a watandar with one exception — that of a peasant, who was called *Kunbi* or *Kul*, who never inherited the land or the right to till a particular piece of land. The entire agricultural land belonged to the state (with the exception of land that was given to the Patils and the Deshmukhs as well as some of the Brahmins and Balutedars[6] as Inams).

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[6] The *bara* (12) *Balutedars* of Maharashtra included: *sonar* (goldsmith), *gurav* (idol caretaker), *nhawi* (barber), *parit* (laundryman), *kumbhar* (potter), *sutar* (carpenter), *lohar* (blacksmith), *chambhar* (shoemaker), *dhor* (tanner, especially cattle skin), *koli* (fisherman or water-carrier), *mahar* (village watchmen, land measurement experts), and *mang* (rope makers and village guards).

The flaws of the *watan* and *jagirdari* system

Sabhasad[7] has briefly described the flaws and evils of the *watandari* system (especially when it came to hereditary revenue collectors) in *Sabhasad Bakhar*: 'In the Adilshahi, Nizamshahi and Mogul territories conquered by Shivaji, the *ryots* used to be under the Patils, Kulkarnis and Deshmukhs. They used to collect revenue and pay an unspecified sum to the state. For instance, for a village yielding 2,000 *hons*[8] as revenue, the watandars used to pay only 200 or 300 *hons* to the government. Therefore, they grew wealthy and powerful by building bastions, castles and strongholds, and enlisting troops. They did not care to wait upon revenue officers (appointed by the king or a jagirdar to collect his part of the revenue), rather they used to resist them whenever more revenue was demanded from them. They grew unruly, and forcibly misappropriated the lands' (Krishna, 1940, p.112). Ramchandra Neelkanth Bawadekar who served on Shivaji's 8-member council as the Finance Minister or Amatya from 1674 to 1680, and then as the Imperial Regent or Hukumat Panah to four subsequent Maratha emperors, strongly condemns the system by saying, 'They fortify their places, rob travellers, loot territories and fight desperately. They make peace with a foreign invader with a

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7 Krishnaji Anant Sabhasad was the author of one of the earliest biographical narratives or the *bakhars* on Shivaji. *Bakhars* or chronicles are an ancient genre of Marathi literature.

8 'A coin in Shivaji's times was not merely a symbolic representation of value (paper money). It was actually worth the value of the metal intrinsic to it. Since the imprint on a coin was a guarantee that the coin was made from a particular metal (or alloy) of a certain weight and purity, it was not necessary to check these attributes every time a cash transaction was done' (Mehendale, 2011, p.717). In the Deccan, the Shia kingdoms used '*hon*' as the highest value coin containing 3.3 grams of pure gold. In the north, however, the Mughals had their *ashrafi mohur* containing 11 grams of pure gold, while the English had their pound containing 9 grams of pure gold. Approximately, each gram of gold was equal to 1.5 rupees, each rupee containing 11 grams of pure silver. 1,000 rupees of the 17th century were equal to 11 kilograms of silver and about 760 grams of gold. However, today's 1,000 rupees will get us less than half a gram of pure gold.

desire to protect their *watans* and help him in every possible manner' (*ibid.*).

Even the jagirdari system had flaws. Bal Krishna (*ibid.*) mentions Dutch records that show a clear reality about the oppressive *jagirdari* system practiced by the Adilshahi government, 'These landlords (jagirdars) rule the towns, villages and the hamlets. This government (Adilshahi) has given them large lands on lease for want of money, because they have no capital. This system does not work well, as it gives rise to abuses, extortion and grinding down of the population. The King favours the lords (jagirdars) by means of *farmans* (official decree) with large territories of which (some) revenue is reserved for him in exchange for some services (mostly maintaining a cavalry contingent for the king). His (jagirdar's) office is not a hereditary one, but a mere favour on the part of the King. Some lords (jagirdars) practically conduct themselves as if they were independent and each takes the appearance of being a king, and after having committed crimes by robbing, murdering, burning and devastating the land to their hearts' content, they appear in the king's court (as heroes), where they are praised for being brave soldiers – if they know how to oil His Majesty's palm. This practice is daily increasing more and more and has taken so very deep a root that the king (who is simply adorned with the crown) is unable to prevent this, for if he deprives these lords (jagirdars) of their dignities, they instantly take refuge in other kingdoms and become traitors.'

Shahaji Bhosale's struggle

Emperor Akbar was in a hurry to expand his empire. He first enforced an alliance with the Rajputs, the warriors among the Hindus. He even married their daughters. Even his son Jahangir, (Prince Saleem) was married to a Rajput princess. Most of the Rajputs accepted his suzerainty, with only the ruler of Mewar, Rana Pratap, who resisted him for years. Here again, the Hindu kings had remained divided.

The battle with Rana Pratap was fought in Haldi Ghati in the hills of Mewar. The Mughal troops were commanded by another Rajput, Raja Man Singh. It was the summer of 1576 and the region had turned into a big furnace. In that heat the very brain boiled in the cranium! The disoriented Mughals could not defeat the great Rajput warrior who fought a fierce and bloody battle while the hills of Mewar burnt under the scorching sun. Maharana later died in 1597 of old age and despair. The Haldi Ghati battle is remembered with passion years and centuries after it was fought. After winning over the Rajputs, and after completing the conquests of northern India, just two years before Maharana Pratap's demise, Akbar shifted his gaze towards the Deccan (Mahajan, 1991, p.78).

The Deccan has a special place in the history of the Mughal Empire. During Emperor Akbar's time, the empire had expanded and occupied almost all of northern Hindustan with the exception of some parts of Bengal. At the end of Emperor Akbar's rule, the Mughal Empire began to extend beyond the Narmada River, which was the empire's southern boundary until then. Khandesh, the rich Tapti valley (northern part of the Deccan) was annexed in the year 1599. The next Mughal target was the Nizamshahi and its capital Ahmednagar, which was defended by the courageous Chand Sultana. The lady was born into the Nizamshahi royal family and married to the king of the Adilshahi. Many a battles and court intrigues followed but Chand continued to hold the Ahmednagar fort. She was eventually assassinated by one of her generals and her death made it easy for Akbar to take the city of Ahmednagar in the year 1600. Chand Sultana's nephew, the young prince was thrown out and the kingdom was annexed. But the annexation was an illusion. The new territory was too large to be effectively governed or even fully conquered. Everywhere, especially in the south and the west, local officers refused to obey the new conqueror; some even began to set up puppet princes as a façade and become the de facto rulers. Akbar did not succeed in taking over the Nizamshahi.

Serious Mughal incursions into the Deccan had begun in the early 17th century when Emperor Akbar passed away and his son Jahangir (also known as Saleem) had become the Mughal Emperor. At that time, the Nizamshahi was ruled by Burhan Nizam Shah, the Adilshahi was ruled by Ibrahim Adil Shah and the Qutbshahi was ruled by Abdulla Qutb Shah. Further south, remnants of the Vijayanagar Empire were under several Hindu kings. Burhan Nizam Shah, who ruled from Ahmednagar was a useless drunkard but Malik Ambar, who had become the Grand *Wazir* of the kingdom had maintained order and forcefully defended the kingdom's northern borders from Daulatabad Fort.

Malik Ambar's life is an amazing story. He was born as Shambu in the year 1550 in a small place called Harar in Ethiopia (Africa) and was sold in infancy. Subsequently, he appeared in a slave market in Baghdad and was re-sold to a man called Qazi Mir. This Mir was kind to him and renamed him Ambar and educated the slave-boy along with his children. In Baghdad, Ambar studied Arabic literature. Years later, Mir sold Ambar in the slave market of Ahmednagar in Maharashtra to one Malik Dabir. Imagine from Harar in Ethiopia in Africa to Baghdad in Iraq and then to Ahmednagar! After the death of Ambar's new 'owner', Malik Dabir, he called himself Malik Ambar and joined the Nizamshahi army as a soldier. Initially, he worked under the command of Chand Sultana. With his extraordinary courage and leadership qualities Malik Ambar later rose to become the Grand *Wazir* of the Nizamshahi. In the first quarter of the 17th century, Malik Ambar and Shahaji Bhosale were names to be reckoned with in the Deccan; they fought some legendary battles. One such was when they barred the Mughal and Adilshahi forces at Bhatwadi, 20 kilometers south, southeast of Ahmednagar. They did so by using a brilliant war technique: they broke a dam and let out gushing waters to destroy their marching enemies and their camps. Shahaji Bhosale distinguished himself in this battle. Emperor Akbar hated him, and so Malik Ambar was Emperor Jahangir's

special object of hatred. After Sultana was assassinated, the credit of protecting the kingdom went to Malik Ambar and Shahaji Bhosale, especially from the onslaught of the incessant Mughal invasions. It is around this time in history that Shahaji Bhosale was granted the *jagir* of Pune and Supe. Malik Ambar's guerrilla war tactics are well known. Perhaps the young and ambitious Shahaji must have picked up some ideas from Ambar and then passed it on to Netoji Palkar who first worked in the Adilshahi military and then went on to become Shivaji's Sarnaubat (Commander-in-Chief).

Since the days of Akbar, when north Deccan first submitted to the Mughal rule (parts of Malwa and Khandesh), there had always remained a stubbornly resistant and independent south Deccan – smaller states, together with two large kingdoms of Qutbshahi and Adilshahi (Hansen, 1972, p.163). It was natural for subsequent Emperors, especially Jahangir to turn to the direction of the Deccan.

Jahangir was born on 9 September, 1569 at Fatehpur Sikri. His father, Akbar, loved his only son dearly but their relationship turned sour when Jahangir became a young man. He rebelled against his father only to reconcile with him later. After Akbar's death in November of 1605, he assumed the throne when his own son, Khusrau, then 17, led a military campaign against his father. Jahangir captured him, blinded him and threw him in the dungeons. In 1611, Jahangir fell in love with the young wife of a Mughal officer whom he murdered to get her. She became Jahangir's queen consort titled Nur Jahan – 'Light of the World'. Her father, Itimad ñud-Daulah, was elevated to the position of the chief minister; her brother, Asaf Khan, became a nobleman at the court; and Asaf Khan's daughter, Mumtaz Mahal[9], was married to one of Jahangir's sons, Khurram (later titled Shah Jahan). Durant (1942, p.472) describes Jahangir without mincing words: 'Jehangir was born with a silver spoon and had enjoyed all the opportunities of an heir apparent. He indulged himself with alcohol and lechery,

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9 The Taj Mahal was built in her memory.

and gave full vent to that sadistic joy in cruelty. He took delight in seeing men flayed alive, impaled, or torn to pieces by elephants. In his memoirs he talks about how, because their careless entrance upon the scene startled his quarry in a hunt, he had a groom killed, and saw to it that the groom's servant's tendons behind the knees were ripped apart, crippling him for life. Having attended to this, he says, "I continued hunting." When his son Khusru conspired against him, he had seven hundred supporters of the rebel impaled in a line along the streets of Lahore; and he remarks with pleasure on the length of time it took these men to die. His sexual life was attended to by a harem of six thousand women, and graced by his later attachment to his favourite wife, Nur Jehan whom he had acquired by murdering her husband.'

By early 17th century, Emperor Jahangir's army started arriving in waves but the fort of Daulatabad on the northern borders of the western Deccan, 250 kilometres north of Pune, stood defiantly, guarding the Nizamshahi like a gatekeeper. It was built upon a massive rock that was eight kilometres in circumference with its escarpments scarped so finely that even a snake was unable to slither the vertical ascent. To make the fort more inaccessible, Malik had filled the enormous moat around the fort with crocodiles. The entrance to the fort was a dark and torturous ascent through a minaret-like structure, with steps cut in the original stone. Malik asked his engineers to construct a large iron brazier to be placed in the middle of this passage, where fire could be kindled. The entrance could be turned into a huge stove when the need arose. Whenever an enemy tried to enter, the heat could turn the intruders into coal. Emperor Jahangir tried for years to push his way through the Deccan but failed. Later, a frustrated Jahangir resorted to derogatory remarks, calling Malik, 'that black wretch'.

Historical records say that Shahaji Bhosale had shielded Ahmednagar, the capital that was about 100 kilometres south of Daulatabad against Jahangir's invasions. Time and again, Jahangir failed. As he turned older, his addiction to opium and women contributed to his defeats. Meanwhile, his footloose generals had let the war languish and in fact

lost some of the Mughal territory from the empire's southern borders to the Nizamshahi, thanks to Malik Ambar's aggressive war strategy.

Jahangir had five sons and two daughters. As history unfolded, it became clear that only Prince Khurram, his second son, could outwit Nur Jahan, with the help of Nur Jahan's brother, *wazir-e-azam*, and his wife's father, Asaf Khan, to become the next Mughal Emperor.

Two years before Shivaji's birth, by 1628, three men of historical importance had faded from the skies of Indian history. Dark clouds had gathered over the Nizamshahi as Malik Ambar had died and was succeeded by his son Fatte Khan, a haughty, religious fanatic, as well as an incompetent and vicious man.

The Adilshahi was thrown in turmoil as Ibrahim Adil Shah had also passed away. The new king, a young boy, Mohammad Adil Shah, the son of Ibrahim Adil Shah was being helped by two powerful warrior noblemen Mirza Mohammad Amin Lari, titled Mustafa Khan and Daulat Yar titled Khawas Khan[10] to get the throne. Unspeakable crimes were committed; Mohammad Adil Shah's older brother, prince Darvesh was captured and his eyes were gouged out. To disqualify his younger brothers from kingship, their ring fingers were amputated.

In the north, Mughal Emperor Jahangir had disappeared behind the curtains of time and his son Shah Jahan had become the Mughal Emperor and ascended the throne on 29 January 1628. His first concern was to recover some of the Mughal terrain lost by Jahangir to the Nizamshahi. He was also burning with ambition; he wanted to devour the Deccan and expand his empire.

It is interesting to know how the Mughal princes became emperors in the first place. Every emperor had to fight or kill or maim or incarcerate his brothers and half-brothers. 'Humayun who had

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10 These men were known by their titles and henceforth will be mentioned by their titles.

three (brothers) had problems with two – Kamran and Askari. Askari was forced to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca but died on the way. Kamran, who had struck coins proclaiming his sovereignty at Kabul, was blinded – his eye being pierced repeatedly, with a lemon squeezed over it followed by the sprinkling of salt. Humayun's son, Akbar, had no brothers but had a cousin named Abul Kasim (son of Kamran). Abul Kasim was imprisoned in Gwalior Fort and put to death by Akbar's orders in 1565. Akbar's son, Jahangir (also called Saleem) had two siblings but fortunately for him, they both drank themselves to death. However, Jahangir lived in constant dread of being superseded by his own son, Khusro, on whom the aging Akbar doted. Shortly after Jahangir's accession, Khusro indeed rose against his father but the uprising was soon suppressed and the prince was neutralised by blinding. Of all the great Mughals, the next emperor, Shah Jahan, was truly remarkable for his cruelty. His first victim was the unfortunate, almost sightless Khusro, whose custody he obtained from his father Jahangir. Khusro was strangled to death by Shah Jahan, though the reason given for public consumption was colic. After Jahangir's death, Shah Jahan had to deal with the intrigues of his stepmother, Nur Jahan, but he succeeded in defeating her. Shah Jahan went on to murder five or six brothers and half-brothers, allowing only one brother to live who was in any case dying with syphilis. This was the worst massacre in Mughal history' (Cheema, 2002, p.18).

It was 1628. In the Deccan, after Ibrahim Adil Shah's passing, Shahaji Bhosale had left the services of the Adilshahi and had come back to the Nizam Shah's court that had become a den of dirty politics. Oblivious to Shahaji Bhosale, the court was about to witness one of the most horrific massacres that would leave lifelong scars on the Bhosale family.

A few months before Shivaji was born, tragedy struck. It was the month of July and the year was 1629. Jija Bai's father, Lakhuji Jadhav had gone to pay his respects to Burhan Nizam Shah with his three

sons. As per the custom, they had kneeled, only to be assassinated. Their home, Sindkhed, lay on the borders of the Mughal Empire and the Nizamshahi kingdom and this had made the king doubtful of their loyalty.

It was then that Shahaji thought of ruling independently from Pune. But that was not to be. The allied forces attacked Pune, the heart of the Bhosale *jagir*. The marching army was led by two Hindu noblemen from the court of Bijapur, Murar Jagdev and Rayarao. They were ruthless while destroying property that belonged to one of their own – houses were burnt and barns demolished. Murar Jagdev ploughed the farmlands around Pune with donkeys to make them inauspicious and ill-fated. The peasants and their families had to flee and disappear into nearby jungles. The borders of Pune gradually became abodes of wolves and wild dogs. After this catastrophic attack on Pune, Shahaji moved his pregnant wife and seven-year-old son Sambhaji to Shivaneri fort to ensure their safety. Eventually, Shahaji Bhosale joined the Mughals.

The vicious intrigues continued in the Nizamshahi. Fatte Khan, son of Malik Ambar, had become the Grand *Wazir* (Prime Minister) of the Nizamshahi. Fatte Khan and king Burhan Nizam Shah had started fighting for power. Fatte Khan was thrown into the dungeons of Daulatabad Fort but soon thereafter, the king was murdered under mysterious circumstances. Some other political twists were taking place in the court of the now murdered Burhan Nizam Shah. Fatte Khan was released and he promptly turned into a Mughal ally, showing inclinations to surrender Daulatabad Fort to them. In the meantime, Fatte Khan tried to be a kingmaker. He declared Hussein, a minor relative of the late Burhan Nizam Shah as king of the Nizamshahi and started ruling as the de facto Nizamshahi ruler from Daulatabad Fort. Emperor Shah Jahan thought of 'cultivating' the 'politically active' Fatte Khan and announced the transfer of the Bhosale *jagir* to Fatte Khan's name.

Around the same time, a young woman from the Bhosale family was abducted in Nasik by the then Mughal general Mahabat Khan. Both these events had shaken Shahaji Bhosale. The self-respecting man that he was, he left the Mughals without relinquishing his *jagir* and declared himself as an independent regent. The native warriors of the era had not much choice, even the so-called powerful Hindu jagirdars were not certain 'what tomorrow had in store for them'. To die for their Muslim kings was the easiest way to live. At least the servants of the invaders died with titles and their children remained alive and wealthy. The rebels of the land were hunted down as though they were dogs with rabies, thrashed and slaughtered, their heads displayed as trophies, their families captured, wives molested and children sold as slaves.

In 1632, when Shivaji was a toddler, Shahaji, now a free man, incited Khawas Khan[11] to defeat Fatte Khan and take over Daulatabad Fort. Power politics of the Adilshahi had changed by then; Khawas Khan was planning to usurp the power and take over the throne of the Adilshahi himself. Fatte Khan, sensing the drift, played his own politics and joined hands with Mohammad Adil Shah, who was now furious with Khawas Khan. Henry Kissinger has once famously said that 'they do not have any permanent friends or enemies, only permanent interests'. These words are, what one may call, an eternal truth.

Emperor Shah Jahan, who once wanted to take Fatte Khan in his fold was livid with Fatte Khan's treachery. He ordered his army to besiege Daulatabad Fort and take the traitor – Fatte Khan – captive. The Mughal besiegement went on for a while and the garrisons of the fort, including Fatte Khan were reduced to eating dead animals. Finally, Fatte Khan surrendered to the Mughals and the Mughals became the master of the invincible Daulatabad. Hussein Nizam Shah was captured and sent to the dungeons of Gwalior fort. With the capture of Daulatabad Fort, the rest of the Nizamshahi region had slipped into a state of anarchy. Shahaji stepped in to help and

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11 Khawas Khan had helped Mohammad Adil Shah get the throne.

became a kingmaker, enthroning Murtaza, a ten-year-old relative of Burhan Nizam Shah, with the help of Khawas Khan who, by then was virtually ruling the Adilshahi. The coronation took place at a fort near Nasik. At this point in time, many Maratha noblemen had joined Shahaji and acknowledged his leadership. However, in 1635, Shahaji's ally in the Adilshahi court, Khawas Khan, who had turned a dictator for several years and had planned a coup against the king was murdered by his rival, Mustafa Khan.

Emperor Shah Jahan planned to personally come to the Deccan to deal with the unstable kingdom of Nizamshahi and capture the region. He, along with 100,000 soldiers, crossed the Narmada on 4 January 1636. Emperor Shah Jahan had a strategy in place – he would join hands with the new Adilshahi king, Mohammad Adil Shah and teach Shahaji Bhosale a lesson. With Daulatabad fort in his hands, Emperor Shah Jahan was sure of Shahaji's defeat. He had imagined a quick victory but history that was in the making, took its own twists and turns.

In 1635, Shivaji was barely five years old. A lot had happened and a lot was about to happen. Shahaji Bhosale had stamped on a snake in a tiger's den. Emperor Shah Jahan wanted to alienate Shahaji, who he suspected had formed a secret alliance with the noblemen of the Adilshahi kingdom. Shah Jahan made a brilliant move and threatened the Deccan kingdoms ruled by Shia kings who he thought would kneel. The recently crowned king of the Qutbshahi kingdom, Abdullah Qutb Shah, surrendered and declared himself as a vassal of the Mughal Empire. However, the king of Adilshahi, Mohammad Adil Shah decided to fight the Mughals. Shah Jahan declared a full-blown war, making his army of 100,000 cavalrymen enter the Adilshahi from three different routes. The marauding Mughals marched across the Sultanate setting fires to villages, destroying traces of cultivation, taking away cattle as spoils-of-war, slaughtering the old and taking the young as slaves. A heartbroken Mohammad Adil Shah was forced to turn into a vassal of the empire. The joint

forces of the Mughal and the Adilshahi chased Shahaji when he moved from one hill-fort to another. Finally, Shahaji offered to surrender on terms when he was at the Mahuli Fort in Thane region (near present-day Mumbai). The heir of the Nizam family was taken from Shahaji Bhosale and was sent to Gwalior prison.

The annexation of the Nizamshahi was now complete. Shah Jahan's desire to erase the Nizamshahi from the map of the Deccan was fulfilled. The famous Mughal-Adilshahi treaty was signed. The terms were that the Adil Shah had to recognise the Mughal sovereignty and pay two million rupees as 'a peace offering'. The Adilshahi also had to maintain 'peace' with the Qutbshahi, the king of which had quickly yielded to Emperor Shah Jahan. The Emperor also defined the boundaries of the Adilshahi and assigned a part of the Nizamshahi to them. Both parties agreed that they would not poach each other's military officers.

Terms of the 1636 Mughal-Adilshahi treaty – Division of Nizamshahi:

- The Adilshahi - Deccan province between rivers Bhima and Seena, Solapur and Vangani *paragana* along with Solapur and Paranda forts, entire province under the Nizamshahi Konkan (Kalyan, Bhivandi and Thane) along with the forts in the region, and Pune and Chakan *paragana* (the Bhosale *jagir*).
- The Mughal Empire - Provinces of Daulatabad, Ahemadnagar, Paithan, Beed, Jalna, Junnar, Sangamner, and Fatehbad (Dharur).
- The Adilshah to pay 2 million rupees in tribute to the Mughal Emperor.
- If Shahaji declined to join the Adilshahi Sultanate, he was to be arrested and driven out of the Adilshahi territory.

CHAPTER 2

Freedom Above All

After 1636, Shahaji Bhosale became a regent of the Adilshahi. Mohammad Adil Shah's decision to take Shahaji Bhosale into his fold was a political one. He was upset with the rise of some noblemen in his court and feared another attempted coup against him. He wanted someone capable to expand his southern borders. Shahaji had been fighting single-handedly against the Mughals and had developed his military power, diplomacy, and mastery over political interplay and financial management. He also had a huge following from the warrior watandars who had stood by him during his years of struggle. Shahaji Bhosale was ordered to leave his *jagir* and move 1,000 kilometres south. Emperor Shah Jahan had sent a message to Mohammad Adil Shah that Shahaji must be deployed where there were no mountains. Without hill-forts, Shahaji Bhosale was like an eagle without its talons, where he would fight fine wars-of-expansion for his king but would be incapable of rebelling against the king.

Within months, as per the Mughal Adilshahi treaty of 1636, Fort Shivaneri was surrendered to the Mughals. Jija Bai and Shivaji went to Bengaluru for a short period where Shahaji lived but they finally came back to Pune, a part of their *jagir*. Jija Bai and Shahaji's older son Sambhaji remained with his father and stepmother Tukabai in Bangalore.

A village in the Deccan was termed '*gaom*': A *gaom* without a market was called '*mouza*' and a *gaom* with a market was called a '*kusba*'. Pune was then a *kusba*. Sending Jija Bai to Pune must have been a wise move. Shahaji Bhosale might have recognised administrative qualities in Jija Bai and thought she could manage his estate at Pune, which might have otherwise been lost due to lack of supervision. The region was devastated by war and famine. The *asmani* (sky-like) calamity of a long drawn out famine had struck the region. Thousands were about to die of starvation, and thousands were about to commit suicide. The land between Gujarat and Golconda was about to become a burial or cremation ground. It was described by Abdul Hamid Lahori, a courtier and an author (cited in Edwardes & Garrett, 1995, p.73), 'the inhabitants of these two countries were reduced to the direst extremity. Life was offered for a loaf but none would buy; rank was to be sold for a cake but none cared for it; the ever bounteous hand was now stretched out to beg for food and the feet which had always trodden the way of contentment, walked about only in search of sustenance. For a long time, dog's flesh was sold for goat's flesh and the pounded bones of the dead were mixed with flour and sold. Destitution at length arrived at such a point that men began to devour each other and the flesh of a son was preferred to his love.'

It is around this time, that Dadaji Kondadeo, a Brahmin advisor of Shahaji appeared in Shivaji's life as a guide and teacher, in the capacity of a Diwan, an administrative manager, of the Bhosale *jagir*. He was Shahaji Bhosale's employee. Little is known about how Shivaji and his mother must have lived in those years but 'it seems from a written statement of the Deshkulkarnis of Khedebare that Dadaji had built a house for Shivaji and Jija Bai at Khed (near Pune), where they might have lived for some time in 1636 before going to Bangalore. Dadaji had also built a mansion for them, the Lal Mahal (Red Mansion), at Pune. After returning from Bangalore, they might have alternated residence between Pune and Khed till 1649' (Mehendale, 2011, p.131).

Dadaji's justice, honesty and perseverance made a difference – he performed the near-impossible task of first gathering the cultivators who had fled and then removing thousand of babul trees that were growing where saplings laden with cobs full of grain should have swayed. It must have been difficult, as babul thorns are long and not easily breakable; piercing even the strongest of footwear. Removing fallen thorns while excavating the trees was another task and if one did not do it quickly enough, new babuls would start growing. Shivaji must have been with him when Dadaji cleared the farmlands, measured the boundaries, heard the disputes, selected the seeds to plough, inspected sowing and harvesting and learnt his first lessons in farming. He must have also come in contact with the peasants and their problems.

One would like to imagine little Shivaji as a naughty and impatient kid who loved to roam the country sitting on his little pony with his friends galloping behind him. One would like to think that he was adventurous and must have given many a sleepless nights to his mother. He must have been inquisitive and must have asked many questions when his mother told him stories from the Ramayana and Mahabharata. He might have asked about his king and how the king had become the king. These questions might have led to discussions about the invaders. Above all, Shivaji grew up in total freedom. His father was away, and since the Bhosale *jagir* was mountainous, King Mohammad Adil Shah had not yet appointed any officers to watch over the lands. The king himself had fallen ill soon afterwards.

With her country's bloody past and a gloomy future, what must have Jija Bai whispered into her younger son's ears, who was looking at the world with wonder, filling his large eyes with innocent blueness of the beautiful yet deceptive sky that hovered over the Deccan? Any other woman would have sobbed with despair, imagining a bleak future for her son. In those times it was *'if you want to live in peace, or live at all, obey, and do what the Emperors and the Kings order'*. Jija Bai would not have told her son that because she knew how the Hindu warriors, including her father, brothers and husband

had suffered while serving their Muslim kings. The famous families she had known had ended up shedding each other's blood over petty fights. Their lives have been wasted and their Kshatriya spirit had been crushed under their servile attitude and false perception of survival instincts. She might have dared her son to break the old order and said, '*When peace demands despair and shame, war remains the only option that is most humane.*'

17th century Deccan was under threat with the Damocles' sword of Mughal invasions hanging over the region's head. It was at this time that the Shia Muslim kings of the Deccan started enticing the 'warrior-material' watandars to join them. 'The revenue management of the country was entirely in their (Hindu) hands. Their military commanders had distinguished themselves on the battlefields and their ministers in council chambers. Murarrao (Jagdev) and Shahaji Bhosale had become (after 1636) the chief support of authority for Bijapur rulers. Madan Pandit (Makanna) was in power in Golconda. The western ghats and hillforts and Mavals were in the hands of their great (Hindu) nobles. Chandrarao Morey was in charge of Ghatmatha from the sources of Krishna to the Varna (rivers). The Sawants were in charge of the southern Konkan, the Nimbalkars were in power in Faltan, and the Dafles and Manes in the eastern Satara regions. The Bhosales were in charge of Puna Mavals and their *jagir* extended as far east as Baramati and Indapur. The Ghorpades, the Ghadges, the Mahadiks, the Mohites, the Mamulkars were similarly in command of horse and foot' (Ranade, 1961, p.20). As time passed, some of them were given *jagirs*, thus turning them into military generals. That was the idea – the Muslim kings of the Deccan would rather outsource their military men than keep them on their payroll. This was an opportunity for many of the Hindu warriors, also called the Sardars of Satraps (in simple word 'generals') to overthrow the Muslim rulers but that was not to be. Instead, they actually helped their Muslim kings to consolidate their kingdoms. Some rich Sardars fought petty battles with each other

creating family feuds that smouldered for generations. This is a real incident: Jedhe of Kari region was getting too powerful to handle. The king had quickly sown the seeds of jealousy by offering him a new *watan*. Another rich watandar, a resentful Khopade trapped the new watandar in a narrow pass. Jedhe and his men were massacred. Then the avengers struck. During a wedding in Khopade's family, the Jedhe clansmen, on horsebacks, entered the home that was adorned with colourful buntings. They rode over the crowd and sent men, women and children enjoying the occasion spinning across the floor, dead or wounded. Some escaped only to be chased by the gallopers and slaughtered like sheep and goats.

There were countless petty battles in which the Hindu satraps from warrior families killed or got killed, making the Kshatriyas in them die with shame. For the *watan* of a Patil, one Kondaji Kanavane killed six members of the Lumaji family; Lumaji retaliated and killed two from Kanavane's family. One Balwant Deshmukh from Maval attacked his own cousins and burnt down their village. One Rangoji Krishnaji called his son-in-law for a meal and poisoned him, thinking that once the son-in-law was dead, his widowed daughter would get her husband's *watan* which could be swallowed by him.

Even Shivaji's own family was no exception. His father and his maternal grandfather's cordial relationship ended after a petty fight. Shahaji Bhosale's lieutenant Khadagale's elephant turned rogue on the streets of Daulatabad. Jija Bai's brother, Dattaji Jadhav Rao had come forward to put the raging elephant to death while Shahaji Bhosale's cousin wanted to rescue the elephant. A bitter fight ensued. Dattaji was killed. Jija Bai's father, Lakhuji Bhosale was enraged for he had lost a son. He attacked Shahaji Bhosale and injured him; that day there was a possibility of a father-in-law killing his son-in-law and widowing his own daughter (Purandare, 2016, p.15). This shameful fight happened in the courtyard of the then Nizam Shah, creating a permanent rift between Jija Bai's family and Shahaji Bhosale's family.

It wasn't just the Hindu Sardars of yore who killed the Kshatriyas residing in their hearts. Then, even the priests had assassinated their self-esteem. When the entire region had turned into a war zone (with the Mughals trying to descend from the north in large numbers) and when the watandars were bathing the region's soil with the blood of other watandars, the so-called learned, the so-called supreme humans, the priests fought with each other for things like who held the hereditary right to perform the last rites of travelers who died in transit at Nasik. Sometimes, their Muslim king was overwhelmed by numerous priests fighting over money a temple was receiving from its visitors. The priests, who boasted of their Vedic legacy, shamelessly knelt in front of their kings to beg for *watans*. Some scholars of the Vedas were known for their never-ending greed; they had spent their lives on the banks of the Godavari and Krishna rivers performing rituals for their Muslim king's welfare, for a yearly fee from the king.

When the Kshatriya spirit was fading away from the hearts of the high and mighty, there was something significant happening in Maharashtra that would awaken the esteem of the poor and the neglected, bringing them together. The *varkari* (translated as the man/woman on a pilgrimage) would bring many castes and occupations together. *Varkari* saints or *sants* as they are called in Marathi expressed their *bhakti*, love for God, in meters like *ovi*, *abhanga*, and *bharud*[12]. These saints wanted equality. *Sant* Dnyaneshwar, born in the 13th century, expanded Shri Bhagavad Gita, which consisted of 700 *shlokas* (Sanskrit verses), into around

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[12] *Ovi* originated in the rhythm of the song sung by women grinding grains at the stone mill. It is a couplet genereally sung by women at work or play. It is also sung at different religious functions as well as while performing domestic chores. *Bharud* is a humorous poetic verse with an undercurrent of satire while *Powada* is a kind of ballad sung in praise of bravery and chivalry of warriors and kings. *Lavani* is noted for its rhythm and undercurrent of erotic sentiments, *Tamasha*, a folk drama with stylised speech, songs and dialogues, and *Lalit* narrates a story.

9,999 Marathi verses (*ovis*). The first line of each *ovi* rhymes with the next two, rendering a lyrical quality to the entire work. This was the first time the Gita was open to the common man, who was not allowed to learn Sanskrit. For most of the *varkari* saints, including Mukta Bai (sister of Dnyaneshwar), Namdev, Chokamela, Eknath, Bhanudas to name a few, the centre of their *bhakti* was Vithoba, a God that is like anyone from the toiling class, man or woman. Vithoba was seen as a friend, philosopher and guide by farmers and *balute*. They talked to him through their poems in a conversational mode as if He was a boy next door, and for *Sant* Janabai, Vithoba even become a helper in domestic chores. The Marathi speaking people or the Marathas were brought together by the simple and easy-to-understand verses of these saints.

'It was not mere political revolution that stirred Maharashtra towards the close of the sixteenth century and the commencement of the seventeenth century. The political revolution preceded, and in fact, to some extent caused, by a religious and social upheaval which moved the entire population. This religious revival was not Brahminical in its orthodoxy, it was heterodox in spirit of protest against the forms and ceremonies and class distinction based on birth and ethical in its preference of pure heart and of the law of love. At its head were the saints and the prophets, poets and the philosophers, who sprang chiefly from the lower orders of society, tailors, carpenters, potters, gardeners, shop keepers, barbers and even the mahars – more often than the Brahmins' (Ranade, 1961, p.04). During Shivaji's time, *Sant* Tukaram had risen from a catastrophic personal tragedy and still had the heart to sing. Tukaram lived in a village called Dehu near Pune, on the banks of Indrayani. He was a trader by birth and a poet by passion. He penned *abhangs*, religious poetry in colloquial Marathi that had opened the doors of the mystic and the meaning of Hindu Dharma to all. The myth that it was only the Brahmins' privilege to learn religion and to write literature, which they had so painstakingly guarded, was shattered. The upper

castes were burning with anger and Tukaram had braved their wrath. They had punished him by flinging his manuscripts in the waters of the Indrayani River but the saint poet had continued to scribble and sing, sitting nonchalantly on the banks of the same river. Millions of pilgrims had arrived year after year to listen to and sing his *abhangs*, making his words immortal.

Many historians say that Tukaram's teachings made a deep impression on Shivaji. With famine raging in the region, Tukaram had lost his wife and child to hunger, and people could draw strength from his words. Here is one of his famous verses, loosely translated (author's translation):

The one who deems them as his own
The ailing and the dejected
The destitute and the rejected
That one is a real saint, that one is God.

Coming back to the Kshatriyas, someone had announced that Kshatriyas do not exist anymore. A few thousand years before, in Dvapara Yuga, Parashurama, the sixth avatar of Lord Vishnu was born to Renuka and the sage Jamadagni. He had received an axe from Lord Shiva after years of penance and meditation. It is believed that he had travelled the entire earth several times over to hunt down Kshatriyas and kill them – a kind of ethnic cleansing. Several thousand years later, in the court of Emperor Akbar, there was a scholar of the Puranas named Krishna Bhat Shesh. He wrote a book called *Shudrachaar Shiromani* in which he declared that all Kshatriyas were killed by Parashurama and now all Hindu men were either Brahmins or Shudras. This implied that no Hindu man was worthy of becoming a king; he was only good enough to become a general of his Muslim king.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Shahaji Bhosale was working for the Adilshahi as a general under their general Ranadaula Khan, who was fighting battles against Hindu kingdoms in South India. It was a new life, a new place, new assignments and a new environment

for Shahaji. The 1636 treaty between the Mughal Empire and the Adilshahi Kingdom had clearly defined the boundaries of the Shia kingdoms of the Deccan. They could never expand northwards. Wars-of-expansions with the Mughal Empire would have destroyed them. They could now expand only in the southern and eastern direction, across the Tungabhadra and Krishna rivers, into Mysore, Madras and deeper parts of Karnataka. Over the next few years, from 1636 to 1645, Virabhadra, Raja of Ikkeri and Keng Nayak, Raja of Basavapatan were humbled and made to pay heavy tribute. In the following year, Ranadaula conquered the fort of Bengaluru and appointed Shahaji to guard the fort and the district. Bengaluru was eventually given to Shahaji Bhosale as a *jagir*.

Afzal Khan, another general of the Adilshahi, who also worked under Ranadaula was taking care of some other campaigns. He was to attack the fort of Sera, held by a king called Kasturi Ranga. When this Hindu king came out to offer submissions, he was murdered by Afzal Khan. In 1641, there was a general uprising of all the Hindu kings against the Adilshahi; all military generals, like Ranadula Khan, Afzal Khan, Shahaji Bhosale and the Adilshahi's Grand *Wazir* Mustafa Khan remained engaged at the southern and eastern parts of the Adilshahi's borders. Shahaji was perhaps the only Hindu (other than one Baji Ghorpade) general who was becoming prominent and famous in the military world of the Adilshahi. This had made many warriors in the Adilshahi's army jealous of Shahaji, who was also known to entertain defeated Hindu kings and mediate between them and Mohammad Adil Shah. Many Muslim as well as Maratha generals in the Adilshahi military considered him a traitor, claiming that he was building a Maratha mafia. An anti-Shahaji lobby was forming and one of its foremost members was Afzal Khan and the other being Baji Ghorpade, himself a Maratha. It was a strange situation – Shahaji Bhosale and Afzal Khan, both warriors, both fearless, worked under Ranadaula Khan but as the years went by, Ranadaula Khan started admiring Shahaji's bravery and military

intelligence quotient. This made Afzal Khan viciously jealous of Shahaji and that resentment would lead to Afzal Khan trying to capture Shahaji and his sons, Sambhaji and Shivaji.

While all this was happening, a miracle was taking place at Pune. The Bhosale *jagir* at Pune was a territory lying between Chakan, Indapur, Shirval and Wai. It was about 100 miles east to west and 50 miles north to south, sandwiched between the Bhima River on the west and the Nira River to the south. Shivaji was a witness to his mother's abilities to manage people and Dadaji Kondadeo's knowledge of land administration, both of whom, in all earnestness, had started stitching together what was left asunder by famine and war. Dadaji set out to bring the barren land of the region under tillage, restoring parts of the Bhosale *jagir* that had fallen into utter decay. Dadaji must have been a good project manager to have instinctively understood the political situation – the region was neglected and hated by the Adilshahi king. Jealous Hindu warriors and noblemen of the Adilshahi had burnt down homes, barns and temples, making the Bhosale *jagir* inauspicious for cultivation by ploughing it with the help of donkeys (the task usually done by oxen). Economic disaster was another major hurdle. The main industry – agriculture – was closed down, leading to stagnation of commerce and loss of human labour. Famine had added insult to injury. There was no social life left in the region. The farmers had fled the country and with them even the *balutes* had vanished. Those who had stayed on, resorted to begging. The population had become highly superstitious and no one wanted to till the land that was declared ill-fated and draw the wrath of evil upon them. The tools used for farming had either vanished or lay rusted and the entire region was blanketed by a suffocating gloom.

To first victory!

Dadaji Kondadeo's vision was 'fields swaying with samplings bent with cobs' and his mission was to kickstart farming activities. His

first task was to get rid of superstition and get people to till the land. He knew that agriculture was a waiting game; it was the industry of the coming year. It was risky as it depended (and still depends) on rain, not too little, not too much and not untimely. A pair of oxen was mandatory and cattle was always at risk of getting lifted by raiders or robbers, leaving no other option for the peasant than leaving his land unsown and barren, ironically a fertile ground for weeds and babul trees. The duo, Dadaji and his master's son Shivaji, must have roamed nearby valleys in search of peasants who had fled into the jungles. The next task was coaxing them back and providing them with food and shelter. In all probability, Jija Bai's motherly counselling must have dared those forsaken and forlorn farmers and *balutes* to hope and to dream. It must have been a big undertaking to make them clear the fields by uprooting the firmly entrenched babul trees and hunt down wolves and wild dogs that had infested the region. Now many animal activists would raise their eyebrows – but that was a part of clearing the land and bringing it under cultivation for human colonisation. Dadaji had also started corresponding with vanquished watandars who had settled elsewhere, to return home and manage the revenue system that was yet non-existent. Dadaji was clever; he tackled superstition by making Shivaji dig a small piece of land with a tiny plough made of gold with big fanfare – a ceremony replete with drum beating, trumpet calls, ballad-singing and declaring nonchalantly that the curse had been removed and the land had once again become auspicious.

The funds for the initial cost of this 'Project Bhosale *Jagir*' might have come from Shahaji Bhosale, who by then had received many awards from Ranadaula Khan. With his excellent military track record, Shahaji had become a favourite general of Mohammad Adil Shah, king of the Adilshahi, who had given him the highest title never before given to any Hindu warriors of the Shah's court. The title was *maharaja*. This might have made other Muslim noblemen

like Afzal Khan and Hindu noblemen like Baji Ghorpade want to eliminate Shahaji.

It was so easy for Shivaji to bask in the periphery of his father's limelight in Adil Shah's court. It was almost a pre-determined, ready-to-move-in situation. He was a jagirdar's son and was expected to follow his forefathers, become a nobleman in the court of his Muslim king, live luxuriously, earn grand titles and occasionally fight wars to defend his king's kingdom. There was a small price to pay though – he had to be at their mercy and be their glorified servant all his life.Instead, he would choose to fight for his people's freedom, in a world that was riddled with slavery, religious conflicts, defeated attitudes of fallen populace, exploitation and mindless carnage. The seeds of this dream were sown in the black soil of the Maval region that was about to start yielding grain and stirring hope in the hearts of its people that included all the Marathas, the Balutedars, the peasants, the Brahmins and even the tribals.

That is why Dadaji could eventually take tribesmen from the Ramoshi community into confidence who lived in the forest and worked as village watchmen. When the country was settled and well administered, they who worked with matchlocks, axes and swords would become Shivaji's best informers and scouts in the coming years. Gradually, more and more men, especially Balutedars from communities like the goatherds (Dhangars) and the hunters (Paradhis) joined the brigade.

All these activities needed more funds and agriculture was the main and the only business. Dadaji revived the mode of assessing the fields by collecting a moderate proportion of actual produce in kind. He had another brainwave, a brilliant out-of-the-box idea. 'Dadaji requested the cultivators to settle down in those areas cleared by them. He offered them lucrative terms. He granted them the necessary legal documents required for permanent settlement. It was decided that these settlers should pay one *ruka* (the smallest

denomination of a rupee) in the first year, three *rukas* in the second year, six *rukas* in the third year, nine *rukas* in the fourth year, twelve *rukas* in the fifth year, half a rupee in the sixth year, and one rupee in the seventh year. Thereafter, they would have to pay normal rates as per the Ambar system – in cash or kind. These lucrative terms attracted a large number of people and the whole region was cultivated within a short space of time. Kondadeo thereafter established a market and developed gardens of fruit-bearing trees and mango groves' (Kulkarni, 2008, p.79).

It was and still is very difficult for a farmer to sell his produce immediately after harvesting because the prices invariably crash due to surplus in the market. So Dadaji's system worked to the peasant's advantage. Seasonal conditions like famine and too much rain were taken into consideration and storehouses were planned to store the produce. When the land started generating funds, Dadaji introduced a system of giving soft loans, farming tools, farm animals and good quality seeds to farmers. Only a farmer would know the desperation to obtain good quality seeds during the sowing season.

Pune was changing rapidly; as the farms started generating revenue, collateral businesses started with renewed vigour. Blacksmiths started making farm-tools as well as weapons like swords, spears and daggers. Masonry workers arrived from the edges of the Adilshahi kingdom to earn better wages. The nearby watandars started visiting Shivaji and his mother for advice. Temples came alive with the usual activities. Dadaji set up camps to train peasants in sword-fighting so that they could ward off bandits and intruders. Seeing their drill, Shivaji had an idea: *What if they also served him as soldiers?* They could do their field duties during the sowing and harvesting season and be his soldiers the rest of the time!

This was the period when Shivaji came closer to his people and this bond of love would stay on all through his life. Shivaji had gathered many friends from his father's *jagir* like Tanaji, Suryaji, Yesaji Kank,

Baji Pasalkar and many more. He now also had the support of some Deshmukhs of the Maval territory. He had to be an inspiring leader – when he had to explain to them the thought of *swaraj* and if he was not convincing or motivating enough, they would not have joined him. In the years to come, the people working under him were so fired by his dream that they were ready to follow him until death. The question was – would he succeed? Would the old order change? Had the time come to change things, and be the wind under destiny's wings?

During this time, Shivaji met a boy from a family of road performers who could disguise as anyone and mimic anyone's voice. Shivaji recognised his talent and groomed him as a spy as well as a scout. The boy's name was Bahirji Naik Jadhav. Bahirji went on to become the commander of Shivaji's spy network that had 2000-3000 men as spies and scouts. Bahirji had invented a code language for his men that included piercing sounds of bird calls and chilling sounds of predators' growling and snarling. Bahirji's men were linguists and were trained to be able to use every weapon of those times with ease. These men could also cross the impassable forests, climb vertical cliffs, swim in deep waters and were rigorously trained in survival techniques. Shivaji was one of the rare Hindu rulers who gave so much importance to his spy network. Bahirji would meet Shivaji secretly in different disguises and many did not know about him; it was as if he did not exist!

A story about Shivaji taking a blood oath in front of a Shivalinga with his young friends in Raireshwar temple near Rohideshwar in Maval is quite famous. Shivaji must have been fifteen at the time, when he visited a Shiva temple with his teenage friends Tana (Tanaji Malusare), Yesa (Yesaji Kank), Surya Malusare, Bhima, Bhairu, Trimbak, Sambhaji Kavji, Chiman, and the 60-year-old, young-at-heart Baji Pasalkar, many of whom later gave their lives in the battlefields for Shivaji's dream. We can merely reconstruct the story. As mentioned before, Shivaji had tasted freedom in Pune with his

father being away in the south. The region was mountaineous and was rendered infertile by famine and wars. The king Ali Adil Shah had not bothered to bring it under a Subhedar. Hence the central officers from Bijapur had never shown interest in Shivaji's *jagir* that had slowly started yielding revenue, thanks to the efforts of Dadaji. By then the villagers, mostly farmers, must have been in love with their jagirdar's son who had revived the region and encouraged them to till the land left barren and infertile. The others, like the *balute* who too benefited from the land revenue like the carpenters, barbers, potters, blacksmiths and cobblers must have regarded him as 'god' because for the first time in their life they must have seen love and care for them in someone's eyes. Shivaji was determined to safeguard his freedom and his people's newfound happiness at any cost, and did not want to bow to any 'king'. At this point, he might have been overwhelmed with just one wish: 'to protect his people that were suffering through unspeakable atrocities at the hands of the invaders'. He may have also started contemplating how to empower them.

Shivaji, by then, knew that the nearby hill-forts that earlier belonged to the Nizamshahi and now belonging to the Adilshahi were utterly neglected. At that tender age he was convinced that only if he could have them and only if he could fortify them could he checkmate the marching armies of the Adilshahi Sultanate, if and when they marched in to annex his freedom and his people's happiness. In the temple, his friends watched in amazement as he raised his sword and made a sharp cut to his thumb, letting the drops of blood fall on the phallus of Lord Shiva saying, 'As Lord Shiva is my witness, I take an oath that I will create a *swaraj* for my people, and the first step will be to take over the dilapidated hill forts standing in my *jagir*.' One can only imagine the impact of his words echoing in the temple, an ancient cave supported by pillars of uncut rock, had on his friends' minds. According to the story, his friends followed suit and pricked their own thumbs one after another to bathe the phallus with blood and show their solidarity.

Shivaji and his landmark judgement

As a young Shivaji roamed his terrain with Dadaji, he must have realised a few other things as well: that watandars, the hereditary revenue collectors were respected like kings in their own areas by the cultivators. So deeply rooted was their authority that it was nearly impossible to approach the villages and the provinces without the Patils and the Deshmukhs. The *watan* system was meant for an efficient administration of the country, to decentralise power and solving many a problem on the spot. But the ground reality was different. Many times, watandars fleeced the cultivators and collected far more than required – and this had made some of them very rich, allowing them to keep a contingent of sentinels to subdue the people and make them yield. The state officials of the Adilshahi king had not visited the mountaineous region for years – thus there was no law and order. The watandars had lost respect for the offices they occupied and started treating the cultivators, their families and their belongings including the cattle as their private property.

When Shivaji was barely fifteen, a Patil of a village called Ranjhe that fell into his *jagir* misbehaved with a woman. The Patil was summoned and the perpetrator could not believe that what he had done was indeed considered as a crime; it was his right, wasn't it? First he started cursing, and then begging in the courtyard of Lal Mahal that was filled with people who had come from far and near to witness the court proceedings. With his mother sitting next to him and with Dadaji standing behind him, young Shivaji gave his verdict, pronouncing the Patil 'guilty' and handed over the punishment: '*Patil of Ranjhe, Taraf – Khedebare, Babaji Bhikaji Gujar, has committed an act of offence, while serving in his office as a Patil. The report of his actions has reached us – and his guilt has been proved beyond doubt. Thereupon, as per our orders, chop off his limbs, all four limbs.*'

That was a landmark judgment, for never before had any (poor) man or woman of the region felt so safe and so happy. On that day, the vulnerable of Maval must have fallen in love with Shivaji.

Who can blame whom when emperors and men of power have already set an example? Muslim invaders regarded women and children as war booty. The Mughals alone had done enough damage. Babur, in his own accord, had killed thousands of men and taken their women captive. Akbar had mustered thousands of slave women in his harem. His small-time general, Uzbeg, boasted of converting and selling half a million humans, mostly women. Akabar's son Jahangir (Prince Saleem), had sold 200,000 children within a year's time to the Persian Emperor. As per his memoirs, he had allowed his subhedars to take the sons of the peasants if they failed to pay taxes. One of his noblemen, Sayed Chaghatai, had 1,200 castrated boys kept for pleasure. The current emperor Shah Jahan had taken countless women in his harem and brought in thousands of Tartar women as guards or sex slaves.

It will be an injustice to Aurangzeb if it is not mentioned that he was totally different from his father and forefathers and there is no indication in any historical records about his sexual shenanigans of any sort and as a matter of fact, he was regarded as a clean and a chaste man. The tragedy is that he did not stop his soldiers from treating women and children of the enemy as spoils-of-war.

It was 1648 and 12 years had gone by after Shivaji had set foot in Pune. Dadaji was getting old and turning weak but his enormous work had paid off – 'Project Bhosale *Jagir*' was successful and the land had started generating 250,000 rupees as yearly revenue, about 250 rupees per village per year from 1,000 villages in the *jagir*. That equals to (as per the exchange rate in those days) 180 kilograms in gold.

Adilshahi alarmed

In 17th century India, 'forts', fortified with ramparts and bastions were considered military strongholds of empires and kingdoms. Difficult-to-reach hill-forts (like Daulatabad) could become a hurdle for a marching army – even a vast one. The enemy had to besiege the fort or leave some of its force behind just to ensure that the garrisons from the fort do not venture out and launch an attack on them. Several steep hills surrounding Pune town had forts on their crests. These hill-forts had belonged to the Nizamshahi and after it was axed into two, Pune and the surrounding terrain, including the Maval had become part of the Adilshahi territory. Even half of the Bhosale *jagir* had become part of the Mughal Empire and the other half consisting of Pune, Supe, Indapur and Chakan had fallen into the Adilshahi Sultanate. Legally and officially, the hill-forts around Pune belonged to Mohammad Adil Shah, the king, but he had not realised the importance of these strongholds. Some *qiledars* (fort-keepers) appointed by the king to maintain the 'military bases' floating in the sky had converted them into either brothels or gambling dens. Some forts were simply falling apart and some were in various stages of decay. No history book tells us what prompted Shivaji to remain loyal to his oath and take over these forts; what made him realise that in times of war, it would be impossible for massive armies of the Mughal Empire or the Adilshahi Sultanate to besiege several forts simultaneously because that would compel the enemy to divide their military force into smaller parts – making them weak and vulnerable.

An old fort on a steep and massive Murumbdeo had come into Shivaji's possession along with parts of his *jagir* in Maval. This fort belonged to the Adilshahi and it was Adil Shah's duty to repair and man the fort with able garrisons. He had done nothing.

It was 142 kilometres southwest of Pune. With funds from land revenue and with the help of Moropant Pingle who was a scholar of architecture, Shivaji added fortified ledges, ramparts and bastions to renovate the fort and named it Rajgad. 1,318 metres above the sea level, it would end up becoming Shivaji's home for 25 years. A little while later, Shivaji took over another hill-fort called Torana (1,403 meters above sea level), which was also in his father's *jagir*, 34 kilometres away from Rajgad. History books do not give a clear picture about how Shivaji acquired it but the most logical explanation is that it was in total ruins and was found abandoned. He, with the help of Dadaji and the others, had the hilltops cleared of overgrown bushes and then renovated the fort structures by rebuilding the walls, ramparts and bastions, repairing water tanks, inner offices and residential quarters, mounting new cannons on the ramparts and finally by keeping garrisons to man them. There is a story that during the repairs of Torana, Shivaji found a treasure of gold coins buried in its courtyard, which helped him take over other forts as well and restore them.

There were also other forts that were and were to come in the hands of Shivaji and one of them was Kondana (1,312 meters above sea level), 28 kilometres southwest of Pune, and Purandar (1,363 meters above sea level), 48 kilometres southeast of Pune. Shivaji had turned them into his (air-based) military strongholds by spending every spare penny he earned in land revenue.

It was now 1648 and 'the strength of Shivaji's force at that time is not known, but it seems it could not have been more than two or three thousand comprising mostly of foot soldiers and a small detachment of horses' (Mehendale, 2011, p.141). With this tiny army Shivaji was about to embark on a journey that would lead him to the frontiers of the Mughals and Adilshahi sultanate, who had huge manpower.

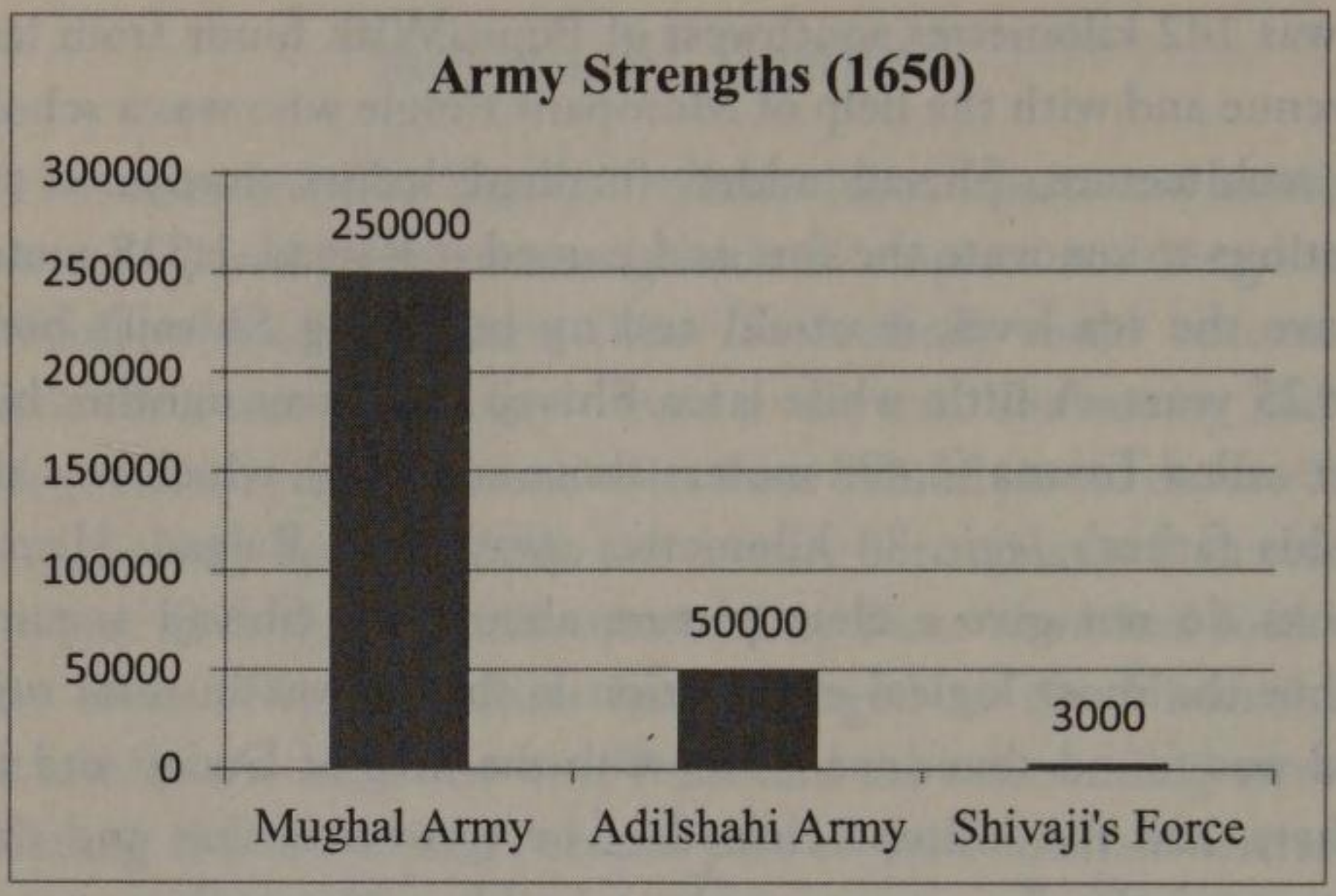


Fig. 2. Comparing Army Strengths of the three forces in 1650

The development of the Bhosale *jagir* under Shivaji, especially repairing, restoring and manning of the hill-forts, had become a bone of contention for Mohammad Adil Shah, the king of Adilshahi kingdom. He asked Shahaji Bhosale for an explanation, Shahaji gave a valid reason that the forts were in ruins and his son simply restored them to prevent further damage and bring in some kind of order. He (Shahaji), nonetheless, sent warning letters to Dadaji Kondadeo as well as Shivaji asking for justification. Dadaji replied that Shivaji was not listening to him and that was that. Shivaji had other ideas germinating in his mind and had already started discussing his dream with his friends from Maval. Shahaji even asked for a part of the revenue his *jagir* was generating to maintain his horsemen to defend the Adilshahi but Shivaji had declared that what was produced was meagre and not enough.

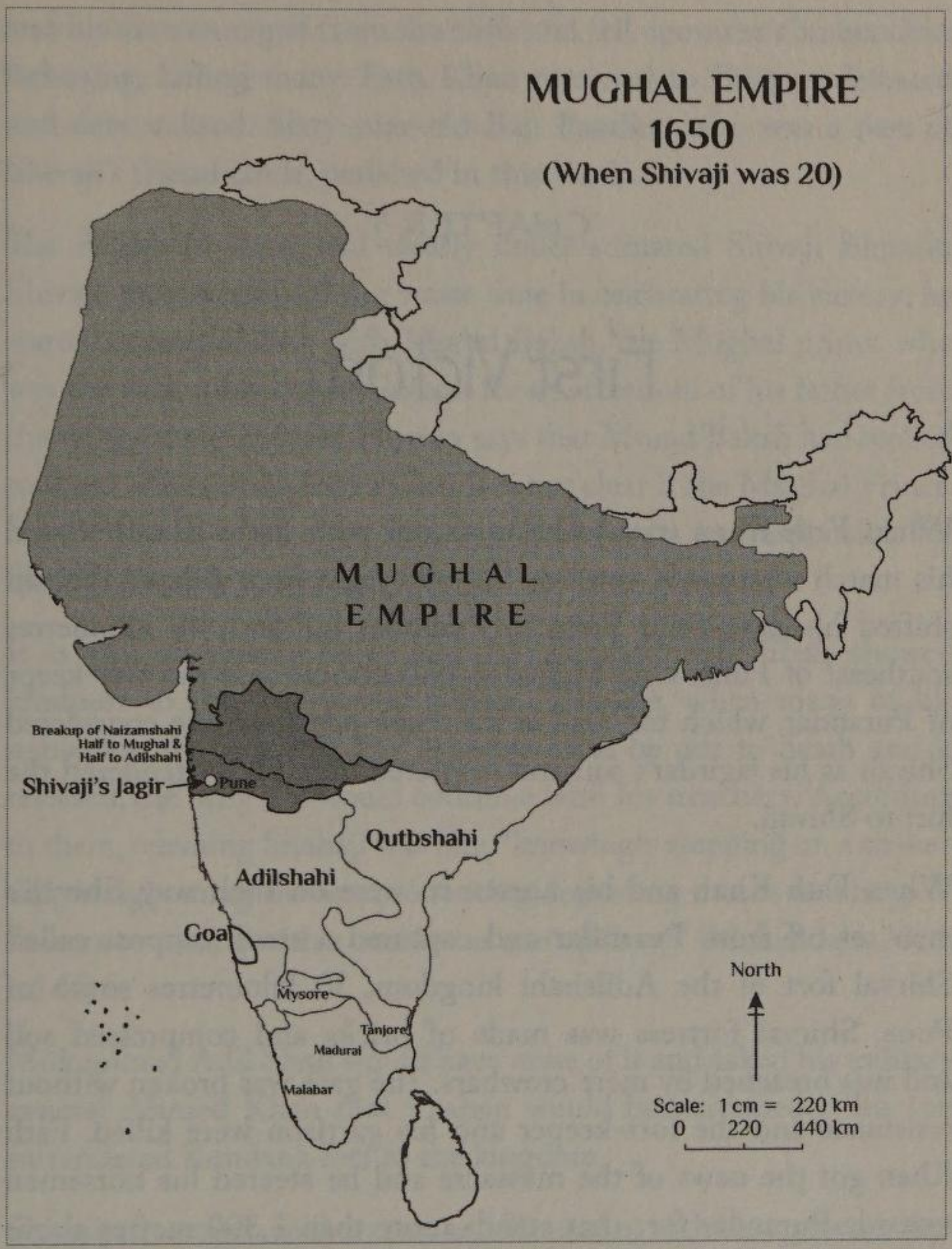
Something else was happening in the valley of Javali, southeast of the Bhosale *jagir*. The valley belonged to the Wai province of the Adilshahi and in the 16th century, it was granted to a Maratha family surnamed Morey, as *jagir*. The then king of the Adilshahi kingdom, Ibrahim Adil Shah had bestowed the

title of 'Chandrarao', meaning the ruler of the moon, upon the original Morey, a title that would be given to all the heads of the Morey family like an heirloom. The first Chandrarao and his men slaughtered the tribals and flattened their habitats, cleared part of the forests and tilled the land. There was more. To the west of the valley, there was Dabhol port in coastal Konkan, a rich trading centre of the Adilshahi kingdom. Essentials like salt, spices, textiles and wood came to Dabhol. It was the main port of southern Konkan that carried on trade with ports in the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. In the 15th and 16th centuries, the port was first a part of the Bahamani Empire and later, after the breakup of the Bahamani empire, it became a part of the Adilshahi. The goods arriving at Dabhol were then transported to Bijapur through the mountains. In the region there were several *ghats*, the tracks skirting the mountains and only a few were wide enough for merchants and their army of oxen and oxen carts to pass. These tracks passed through the valley of Javali and the Morey family had earned a lot of money by collecting road tax from the merchants. Meanwhile, several generations of the Adilshahi had come and gone, and the Moreys had stopped paying revenue to their kingdom. The last of the Moreys had passed away sometime after 1644 without an issue. The last Morey's widow Mankai wanted to adopt a son (a man who was 35-years-old) and carry on with the affairs of her *jagir*. Many opposed the idea but Shivaji, then barely a teenager, along with all the watandars of his *jagir*, supported Mankai and the adoption took place with proper documentation, legalised with Mankai's palm and thumbprints.

Shivaji Bhosale's intervention in Javali had angered Afzal Khan, Adilshahi's subhedar of Wai province, who was, in any case, waiting for an opportunity to strike back at the Bhosales. Even the current king, Mohammad Adil Shah and his Grand *Wazir* Mustafa Khan were displeased since they, the rightful owners of Javali were not consulted in this matter. There were many other things that

had upset the king. Many Hindu kingdoms at the sultanate's southern borders had given in to Shahaji Bhosale's authority and every Muslim warrior sent by the king to help their wars-of-expansion at their southern borders had started regarding Shahaji as his friend, philosopher and guide. The growing popularity of his Maratha *satrap* had shaken the king, who previously had admired the capabilities of Shahaji. The insecurity made the king ask one Mustafa Khan, now the Grand *Wazir* of the Adilshahi to arrest the 'cunning' Maratha. Under the directives of Mustafa Khan, the Grand *Wazir* and his right hand man, Baji Ghorpade arrested Shahaji by deceit when he was asleep in his camp. Some history books say that Ghorpade and some say that Afzal Khan took the captive to Bijapur, Adilshahi kingdom's capital, thereafter Shahaji was sent to a prison. According to Ranade (1961, p.31), 'Baji Ghorapade of Mudhol was mean enough to entrap Shahaji at the bidding of the king of Bijapur, and Shivaji had to suppress him (later) by terrible revenge. The Sawants of Wadis and Dalvis of Konkan, and the Shirkes and Surves of Shringarpur were similarly obstructive, and refused to join the new movement and they had therefore to be surpassed. The Nimbalkars of Faltan and Manes of Mhaswad and Zunzarrao Ghadge, all in the Bijapur service continued to fight against the national movement of Shivaji. It will be thus seen that the strength of the new movement lay entirely on the middle classes of the population, the old Maratha jagirdar families contributing little or no help.'

It was time to subdue the rebellious lad called Shivaji Bhosale and the time was right – his father, the powerful Shahaji was in prison. Mohammad Adil Shah sent a military officer called Fath Khan along with 5,000 horsemen to capture the disobedient boy and take over the hill-forts. The king also sent official decrees to several watandars in Bhosale's Pune *jagir* to join Fath Khan in this offensive.



Map 1. The Mughal Empire in 1650, of which Shahaji's Pune jagir *was a part*

CHAPTER 3

First Victory

When Fath Khan (not to be mistaken with Fatte Khan) started his march westwards, towards Shivaji's *jagir* from Bijapur, Shivaji shifted his base from Pune to Purandar hill-fort, 46 kilometres southeast of Pune. One Mahadaji Nilkanthrao was the fort-keepr of Purandar, which too was in the Pune *paragana*. He considered Shivaji as his jagirdar's son and respected him. He surrendered the fort to Shivaji.

When Fath Khan and his horsemen were on their way, Shivaji's men set off from Purandar and captured a small outpost called Shirval fort of the Adilshahi kingdom, 30 kilometres south of Pune. Shirval fortress was made of bricks and compressed soil and was breached by mere crowbars. The gate was broken without resistance and the fort-keeper and his garrison were killed. Fath Khan got the news of the massacre and he steered his horsemen towards Purandar fort that stands more than 1,300 metres above the sea-level. It was nearly impossible for the horses to climb the Purandar hill, so Fath Khan's horsemen must have tethered their horses at the foothills and started climbing the hill on foot to capture the wayward, spoilt son of Shahaji Bhosale. As they started climbing the hill they were met with a meteoric shower of boulders, arrows, rockets and pebbles shot by catapults. Fath Khan lost many men, including his second-in-command, Muse Khan. As some persisted with their upward climb, Shivaji's chieftain called Kavji

and his men emerged from the cliffs and fell upon the climbers like lightning, killing many. Fath Khan returned to Bijapur, defeated and demoralised. Sixty-year-old Baji Pasalkar who was a part of Shivaji's friend circle, perished in this battle.

The Adilshahi army had clearly underestimated Shivaji Bhosale. Shivaji, meanwhile, did not waste time in celebrating his victory; he started corresponding with Murad Baksh, the Mughal prince who was the then subhedar of Gujarat for the freedom of his father from the dungeons of Bijapur. History says that Murad Baksh had replied to these letters of diplomacy but it is not clear if the Mughal Prince, the fourth son of the then Emperor Shah Jahan, was responsible for Shahaji Bhosale's release.

It is still a mystery as to why Mohammad Adil Shah showed kindness to the imprisoned Shahaji Bhosale, when many of his noblemen thought that the prisoner must be put to death and if released, the 'wily fox' would continue with his treachery. 'According to them, releasing Shahaji was like, "knowingly stepping on a snake's tail, straightening the scorpion's sting, regarding thorns as a heap of flowers or resting with a beehive as one's pillow!"' (Mehendale, 2011, p.144).

Mohammad Adil Shah would have none of it and asked his military general Ahmed Khan that Shahaji would be pardoned if his son surrendered Kondana fort to the kingdom.

Shivaji, after much deliberation and discussion with his senior advisor, Sonoji Dabir[13], handed over the Kondana fort with a heavy heart. The king, as promised, released Shahaji and sent him on a military

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13 'Sabhasad says Sonoji accompanied Shivaji as *Dabir* when he took charge of the Pune *jagir* i.e. around 1642 ... He died on 25 January 1665. He was succeeded in this office by his son Trimbakpant. He (Trimbakpant) died on 18 April 1677 ... He was succeeded in this office by his son Ramachandrapant whom Sabhasad mentions as *Dabir* in his narration of the coronation ceremony. He retained this office till Shivaji's death' (Mehendale, 2011, p.370).

expedition. By then it was the summer of 1649; the watandars like Kanhoji Jedhe who had helped Shivaji in his Purandar battle and who were imprisoned along with Shahaji were set free too. Shahaji asked them to assist his son to look after the Pune *jagir*.

Nothing much happened in the next one or two years but at this point of time, Dadaji Kondadeo passed away due to old age.

Mustafa Khan, the Grand *Wazir* of the Adilshahi passed away after a chronic disease and the king, Mohammad Adil Shah suffered a paralytic attack. At this point, Khan Mohammad who had helped Mustafa Khan to assassinate Khawas Khan in the year 1635, to save his king from a coup became the Grand *Wazir* of the Adilshahi. With her husband bedridden and their adopted son Ali just a young boy, the queen, called the Badi Sahiba, took over the reins of the kingdom but soon, her kingdom was to become a victim of Aurangzeb's hunger for power.

Shivaji's first victory reinforced his faith in forts as military strongholds. He spent huge amounts of money in building, restoring, repairing, equipping, garrisoning and administrating them. The commandant of the fort was called *havaldar* or the fort commandant and was assisted by two officers, *subnis* (the muster clerk or the scribe) and *karkhanis* (the store keeper). They were transferable. The commandant had a fort-sarnaubat (not the high ranking one like the cavalry or infantry sarnaubats) who would be responsible for the fort-garrisons. These three officers were of equal rank. They acted together and served as a check on one another. This was done so that forts may not be given to the enemy by any one officer.

There were other officers who were responsible for gate passes, manning the watchtowers, patrols, stores of ammunition and weaponry. All these men were chosen by Shivaji for their proven track records as well as their valour, daring, honesty, alertness and most importantly, their appreciation of the fort as a vital treasure of

the nation. Every fort was a small habitat where trees were planted and grown, rain was harvested in man-made ponds, and in some forts even crops were cultivated. Each of Shivaji's big forts had Brahmin priests, medics, wound dressers, blacksmiths, carpenters, stone cutters, cobblers and their families. Many of the forts could fight for months without outside supplies. The *havaldar* was entrusted with keys of the fort and the gates had to be shut by dusk. There were strict instructions of not opening the gates at night even if Shivaji himself was at the doorstep. The people were taught to regard the fort as their mother as indeed it was a refuge of the inhabitants of the surrounding villages in time of invasions.

The forests at the foothills of the hill-forts were given special attention by Shivaji. Tribals like Ramoshis, Parwaris and Berads and *balutes* like Mahars and Mangs were appointed as the foothill sentinels. In fact Shivaji broke bread with them on several occasions, winning their hearts and love. They were also given rent-free land between the hills to till and make a comfortable living.

In the year 1654, a tragedy struck the Bhosale family. Shivaji's brother Sambhaji was killed in a battle. This happened during the Adilshahi's military campaign against the Hindu kings of southern India. The incident took place at Kanakagiri, a temple city that falls in modern day Karnataka. Sambhaji, all of thirty, must have been a strapping young man at the time of his tragic death. While Shivaji had remained with his mother in Maharashtra, Sambhaji lived with his father in Karnataka and was a military officer in the services of the Adilshahi. He was called to lead the besiegement around the fort. History mentions that Afzal Khan, who had been jealous of the success of the Bhosale family, had bribed the king of Kanakagiri and also informed him about the presence of Sambhaji in the siege. Sambhaji was made to keep vigil on the fort of Kanakagiri from the trenches dug around it and was waiting for reinforcements promised by Afzal Khan. The reinforcements never arrived but a cannonball ejected from one of

the cannons placed on the fort's ramparts landed on him, killing him instantly. Sambhaji died sometime between April 4, 1654 and March 20, 1655.

Either Afzal Khan wished to subdue Shivaji who was in possession of several forts (of Adilshahi) around Pune, or he wanted to avenge the defeat of Adilshahi's military forces by Shivaji at Purandar fort or both. Whatever the reason, it was a tragic blow to Jija Bai, who had already lost her father and brothers in an execution style killing in the court of Nizam Shah when they had kneeled to pay their respects. That incident must have inflicted never-healing wounds on Jija Bai's heart but the death of her first son must have lacerated her spirit. Her second son, Shivaji was pursuing his dream of a *swaraj*. The dream of an independent state that she had coaxed him to dream had made Shivaji a villain in the eyes of their king. The rulers of Adilshahi had started regarding him as a national threat, an enemy of the kingdom and it was becoming increasingly dangerous to live in Pune. The family, Shivaji's mother, wives and daughters had moved to Purandar fort.

Twenty-five kilometres southwest of Pune, from the point of Kondana fort, a long arm of the Sahyadri Mountains runs towards the east and is called the 'Bhuleshwar Range', named after the naïve avatar of God Shiva. One of the massive mountain-masses of Bhuleshwar is Purandar. The fort built on this mass is more than 1,300 metres above the sea level and 700 metres above the foothills. Purandar was Shivaji's home for a short period before the family eventually moved to Rajgad, about 60 kilometres southwest of Pune.

Rajgad was Shivaji's home for 25 years and was surrounded by military strongholds like the hill-forts Kondana, Torana and Lohagad. It was regarded as the core of Shivaji's territory or his father's *jagir*. Initially, the *jagir* was the 'ground zero' for all his military activities. This 'ground zero' had Pune *paragana* (middle

of the *jagir* with 290 villages), Supe *paragana* (east of Pune with 63 villages), Indapur *paragana* (southeast of Pune with 85 villages), Chakan *paragana* (north of Pune with 64 villages) and Maval (west of Pune with more than 600 villages). The figures show that the hilly Maval covered more than half of the Bhosale *jagir*. The men of Maval who were eventually to become the backbone of Shivaji's army were loyal, hardy, wiry and good in mountain climbing.

The Sahyadri range runs north-south along the western edge of the Deccan. These mountains separate the plateau called Desh from the Konkan coastal strip. At Maval (the country at the western edge of the plateau), the hills are steep and rocky, girded towards the top by massive basaltic rocks. The lower slopes are riddled with deep snaking dells that look like enormous elephant trunks. Those hills, regarded as the war-elephants of Shivaji had divided Maval into many parts named after the rivers flowing through the gorges between the mountains. If Pune was the scabbard of Shivaji's terrain; Maval was its sword. Shivaji wanted a shield too, the valley of Javali (south of Pune) that lay at the extreme north-western corner of present-day Satara district.

A few kilometres south of Maval the mountains had taken a more aggressive avatar. The valley of Javali had turned those war-elephants into rogue elephants. The hills had become steeper, the valleys deeper and the forests at the foothills denser. In those days, Javali was more impassable than Maval. About 100 kilometres of the valley's western border was protected by hills overlapping hills, some rising more than 1,200 metres above the sea level. To the valley's east rose the mountain of Mahabaleshwar, more than 1,300 meters above sea level. The valley, sandwiched between these massive hills, was an eerily lonely place, cut off from the world of the empires and the sultanates. Koyna (a tributary of the Krishna River) that originated from the mountain of Mahabaleshwar had come down to the valley to flow from north to south. The forests at the foothills were covered with teak, *ainy*, *karanja* and *jamoon* trees entangled by

woody vines of liana. Brooding bamboo groves covered the slopes of the hills. The valley was a maze, infested with predators. Several ghats (mountain tracks) cut through these hills to reach the the coastal strip of Maharashtra. Two of the passes were broad enough to transport parties of carts and oxen as well armies of infantrymen and cavalrymen. Capturing Javali would open opportunities for Shivaji to enter the coast called the Konkan and further expand his terrain. The annexation of Javali would be the first step that would take Shivaji away from being the son of a jagirdar and a step closer to his dream.

Aurangzeb

Narhar Kurundkar writes in Marathi: Aurangzeb was not just a fanatic. He was brutal but he was also a fine military strategist and an intelligent statesman. He was not an insane tyrant or a jihadist; he was a representative of the Islamic invaders. His defeat was their defeat, right from Mahmud of Ghazni. We never understood Aurangzeb and hence we never can understand Shivaji (Kurundkar, 2003).

When Shivaji, with the help of Dadaji was busy restoring the Bhosale *jagir* in Pune, Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan was busy building the city of Shahajanabad (*quila-e-mubarak* or the Red Fort) in Delhi and Taj Mahal at Agra. The empire was at its peak and had entered into one of its most financially-stable times. Shah Jahan could afford to make the Red Fort into one of the most ornate monuments in the world, with its massive open spaces and high ceilings, not to mention the exquisite use of marble. There is no need to describe the beauty and magnificence of the Taj Mahal.

Muhi-ud-Din Mohammad Aurangzeb, born on 24 October 1618, was the third son of Shah Jahan and Mumtaj Mahal. From a very early age he showed that he was braver than his brothers.

The year was 1633 and Aurangzeb was barely 15 when the most incredible incident happened in his life. It was a rare display of valour when Aurangzeb stood his ground after being attacked by an angry elephant. It happened during an elephant combat on the banks of Yamuna River outside Agra Fort. The victorious beast lost its cool when the vanquished and bleeding elephant tried to flee. The angry victor turned his attention to the Mughal princes and charged. All his brothers fled, only Aurangzeb kept his horse from running away and struck the elephant on the forehead with his spear. A sweep of the rogue's tusk hurled Aurangzeb's horse on the ground but he quickly dismounted and faced the elephant. Just then help arrived and succeeded in driving away the murderous animal, but the incident had already shown who the real hero was, winning Aurangzeb countless fans at Agra. Emperor Shah Jahan rewarded his heroic son with his weight in gold.

The eldest son of Shah Jahan, Dara Shukoh, was his father's most favourite and was considered the crown-prince. All four princes were subhedars of different Mughal provinces. Dara Shukoh was given the *subhedari* of several revenue-rich provinces in the north. He lived in Agra Fort, in the lap of his father's riches, where he would hold court with Sufi scholars, Sikh gurus and Hindu Pundits to discuss the philosophies of different religions. His body of work was astonishing. He had translated the Upanishads written in Sanskrit into Persian and had penned a book called *Majma-ul-Bahrain* (confluence of two seas) where he had tried to explain the similarities between Sufism and Hinduism. His three brothers, meanwhile, were sent on various frontiers to fight the war-of-expansions and Aurangzeb was invariably given the most difficult of assignments. There was no love lost between the brothers. Aurangzeb was hardly 18 when he was made the subhedar of Mughal-occupied Deccan. It was during this time that he announced his retirement to protest against Dara Shukoh's jealous meddling with his work and Shah Jahan's partiality. This announcement angered Shah Jahan and he at

once deprived Aurangzeb of his *subhedari* and allowances, forcing Aurangzeb to stay put at Agra like a disgraced and suspended official for months.

It was then that his sister Jahanara, who was called Padishah Begum (the empress *begum*) intervened and reinstated Aurangzeb as the subhedar of Gujarat. Aurangzeb never looked back and worked hard to suppress lawlessness in that province and was given many awards by Shah Jahan. After his successful stint in Gujarat he was sent to north of Kabul, to recover Balkh, a fertile terrain and Badakhshan, a fearsome region covered with ridges and valleys. It was the cradle of the royal house of Timur.

Leaving Kabul on 7 April, 1647, Aurangzeb reached the city of Balkh on 25 May and battled laboriously with the violent enemy. Thousands of Rajputs working for the Mughals had shed their blood. Huge money was spent in supplies but all that was wasted for absolutely no gain; the abandoned goods alone had cost the Mughals several million rupees. During this campaign, Aurangzeb performed an act that earned him instant fame and respect in the Islamic world. While the Mughal army was fighting desperately with the vast legions of Abdul Aziz Khan, king of Bukhara, the time for the evening prayer (*zuhar*) arrived. Ignoring the warnings of his officers, Aurangzeb dismounted from his elephant, knelt down on the ground, and deliberately and serenely went through all the ceremonies of the prayer, while the warring armies stood still and watched with reverence. Even the enemy soldiers, with their swords dripping with blood, forgot about their mission for a while. Abdul Aziz on hearing of it cried out, 'To fight with such a man is to lead to one's own ruin!' and suspended the battle. After this, Aurangzeb was sent to Kabul, and then to Multan and then back to the Deccan again.

In 1652, Aurangzeb – by then a mature man in his mid-thirties – was posted to the Deccan as the subhedar of Mughal-occupied

Deccan, with Khirki at the foothills of Daulatabad fort as his capital. Khirki, named as such since it means a window, *to gaze at the Deccan,* was a small hamlet that was transformed into a beautiful city by Malik Ambar, the erstwhile Grand *Wazir* of the Nizamshahi. The city was renamed by Aurangzeb as Aurangabad. Aurangzeb's second tenure in the Deccan was the most important chapter of his life. As Hamid-ud-Din Khan Bahadur writes, 'what Gaul was to Julius César as a training ground for the coming contest for empire, the Deccan was to Aurangzeb' (Bahadur, 1925, p. 02).

During this period, Aurangzeb faced several problems, some very similar to those faced by Shivaji, especially about trying to make the barren land a revenue rich one. In the case of Shivaji, Murar Jagdev had ploughed the land around Pune with donkeys, making the land 'impure'. People believed in the superstition that if land was tilled by donkeys, tilling it again would bring them bad luck. The war and famine had also forced the cultivators to flee, adding insult to injury. In the Mughal terrain of the Deccan, an erstwhile subhedar, Khan-e-Dauran, did not plough the land with donkeys but had tortured watandars as well as peasants and ruthlessly stripped them for maximum revenue. It was done so that he could show off his potential to generate money to Emperor Shah Jahan. His 'quick-fix' tyranny had forced the peasantry to flee, leaving behind unsown land that was gradually covered with babul trees.

Shah Jahan had given the most difficult task to Aurangzeb – asking him to pay more attention to the cultivators of the Mughal *subhas* in the Deccan and make it a better revenue-generating industry; as if the Emperor wanted his third son to fail. Aurangzeb had to do some homework. The Mughal *subhas* of the Deccan, like Berar (Vidharbha), Khandesh and Ahmednagar (that included Daulatabad and Aurangabad) were less fertile than the northern Mughal provinces blessed by the waters of the Ganges and Yamuna. Before

he took over as the subhedar of the Deccan, Aurangzeb was given to understand that the region yielded more than 30 million rupees per year in revenue but the ground reality was different. It was less than one-third of what he was told. With these funds, Aurangzeb was not able to maintain a large force that was needed to keep two powerful Shia kingdoms (Adilshahi and Qutbshahi) looming across the empire's southern borders in check. He repeatedly complained about the huge difference between the estimated income (*jama*) and the actual collection (*hasil*).

Moreover, fertile regions of the Mughal terrain in the Deccan were *khalisa* – directly under the emperor and revenue from these was collected by the imperial officers and was sent to Shah Jahan directly. Aurangzeb was a good administrator, he appointed men to visit villages to understand the ground zero situation, and realised that unless they appointed people to study and understand agricultural science and its subjects, nothing was possible. If the land was not made revenue-rich, it was impossible for him to maintain his army.

Aurangzeb knew that if his mansabdars had to depend only on their *jagirs* and if the land was not made fertile, it would be disastrous. His mansabdars too had made it clear that if they did not get funds they would be unable to maintain the number of horsemen they were expected to maintain. The institution of *mansabdari* was developed by Akbar and referred to the military organisation of the aristocracy. Due to its nature each nobleman/mansabdar was personally loyal to the emperor. Each mansabdar had a dual numerical rank – *dhat* that signified his personal rank, and *sawar*, which decided the number of horsemen he was required to maintain. The most interesting part is how these mansabdars were paid to maintain their *dhats* and *sawars*. Some were given cash but most of the mansabdars were given land as *jagir* and the revenue they collected from the watandars was their payment. In other words, most of the mansabdars were also jagirdars.

Considering the large number of mansabdars[14], 80% of the imperial terrain was assigned in *jagirs*, the remaining 20% was called *khalisa*, whose revenue went directly to the Emperor for his pleasure.

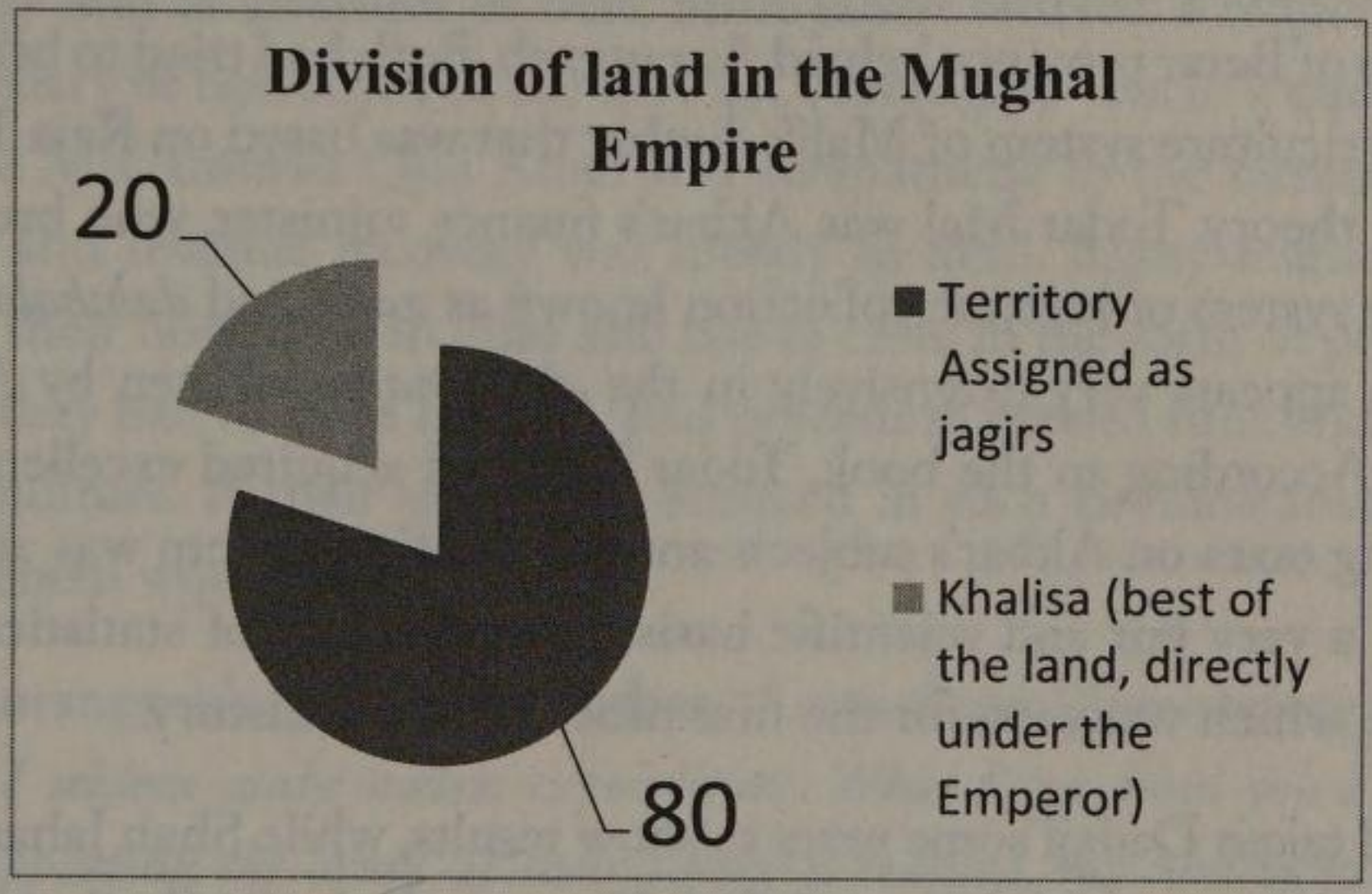
Division of land in the Mughal Empire
20
80
Territory Assigned as jagirs
Khalisa (best of the land, directly under the Emperor)

Fig. 3.

Coming back to the mansabdars under Aurangzeb, Shah Jahan added insult to injury by announcing that all mansabdars in the Deccan must maintain the expected number of horsemen and ordered branding of the horses (with the mansabdar's name) to make sure of the numbers. The emperor did not stop at that, he also

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[14] Some of the high-ranking mansabdars had a huge number of horsemen under them. The mansabdars had ranks and there were 28 *dhat* ranks – from 10 to 7000. mansabdars holding more than 1000 *dhats* were called *Omrahs* or *Amirs*. The high and mighty of the era, including Mughal princes fell into this category. The next number is *sawar* or horsemen – but these numbers were for official papers. For example, if a mansabdar held a rank of 1000 *dhats*/1000 *sawars*, the actual number of horsemen he kept was less than half or even lesser (the actual figure was mentioned as *du aspa sih aspa*). There was no distinction between the military and civil mansabdars; only civil mansabdars (like medics, accountants, and palace administrators) had more *dhats* and less *sawars*. The seniority was liked to the *dhat* figure, and an accountant holding a 1000 *dhat* and just 10 *sawars* was considered equal to military mansabdars holding 1000 *dhats* and 1000 *sawars*. Mansabdars were paid separately for the *dhat* and for the *sawars*; the *dhat* figure was their personal salary and the *sawar* figure was to maintain the horsemen and horses in his contingent.

ordered inspections. Aurangzeb pleaded with his father, asking him to consider the dire situation in the Deccan. There was hope though. Like the administrative manager of the Bhosale *jagir*, Dadaji who had helped Shivaji rescue the land around Pune, Mohammad Quli Khan, *diwan* of Berar province helped Aurangzeb. Both had tried to bring in the agriculture system of Malik Ambar that was based on Raja Todar Mal's theory. Todar Mal was Akbar's finance minister, who brought a new system of revenue collection known as *zabti* and *dahshala*. His name appears very extensively in the *Akbarnama* written by Abul-Fazl. According to the book, Todar Mal had acquired excellence in levying taxes on Akbar's subjects and his taxation system was arrived at on a very fair and scientific basis. Extensive use of statistics was made, which was seen for the first time in Indian history.

It had taken Dadaji some years to show results, while Shah Jahan had no such patience. Mohammad Quli Khan worked relentlessly, many a times dragging the measuring chain to ascertain the farm boundaries with his own hands. Cultivators were given loans to buy seeds, cattle and tools while the loan was recovered at the time of harvest and that too on instalments but it was taking time. As arrears mounted and it became impossible to manage his army, Aurangzeb, in desperation, must have done some mathematics for he had to solve the problem. It was a question of his army's survival and if he let his army wither, he was destined to die in the war-of-sucession with his brothers and fade away from the pages of history. He could get funds by either dissolving the *khalisa* land and bringing it under him, or by rigorously collecting tribute money, defaulted by the Deccan kingdoms. He could also either take financial support from revenue rich provinces like Malwa and Surat or get funds directly from the Emperor's treasury.

Shah Jahan allowed Aurangzeb only one option – to dissolve some of the *khalisa* land and use the revenue for administration. The financial dispute between the father and his third son continued for years, with Shah Jahan accusing Aurangzeb of financial fraud. In one of the letters he has written, '*it is unworthy of a Muslim to take all*

the productive villages of the provinces and to assign all the unproductive ones to the others' (Sarkar, 1912, p.186).

His father bringing in 'religion' to reprimand him hurt Aurangzeb deeply and in addition to that, Shah Jahan ordered a reduction in the salary of horsemen in the Deccan. Aurangzeb was in a quandary. Since Mohammad Quli Khan was sympathetic to the farmers, the loan and revenue recovery was mostly in kind. Many mansabdars paid their horsemen in kind and not in cash, in the form of produce that they had to store and sell. This procedure needed time and some expenditure. If their salary was reduced in such circumstances, the horsemen would leave.

In Aurangzeb's letter to his father he mentions: '*Your majesty knows that I seldom make useless expenditure. What I get from you I spend in supporting the army. If their salary is reduced, my contingents will decrease. Give me time; it is difficult to restore a country that has been devasted by various calamities. How can one make the land flourish with a season or two, a land that has remained fallow and infertile for years?*' (Sarkar, 1912, p.202).

Many minor issues had become reasons for Shah Jahan to insult his third son; issues like the appointment of an artillery chief, catching of elephants, sending mangoes to the court, securing weavers for the imperial cloth factory, collection of tribute from the Shia kingdoms of the south and many more. Aurangzeb was misunderstood, suspected and unjustly reprimanded from the very beginning of his term in office (as subhedar of the Deccan). And the bitterness that arose was one of the reasons why the war-of-succession was conducted so heartlessly and unscrupulously (Sarkar, 1912, p.203).

One may wonder about this hatred that Shah Jahan felt for his third son, his own flesh and blood. Was Dara Shukoh, the eldest and Shah Jahan's most favourite instigating his father against Aurangzeb? The truth was that every Mughal prince who went on to become the emperor had problems with his male relatives, especially brothers

and half-brothers. The hatred between Dara Shukoh and Aurangzeb had reached another level, it was smouldering for years and was waiting for a final explosion.

The question was, was Aurangzeb strong enough to survive the Emperor's wrath and Dara Shukoh's hatred? Only time would tell.

1656 – when Shivaji was twenty-six and Aurangzeb thirty-nine – was a remarkable year for the both of them. The stage was set for one of the biggest historical dramas to unfold, with Shivaji and Aurangzeb as protagonists. The other characters included Shah Jahan (the aging Mughal Emperor), his first son Dara Shukoh (the crown prince), his second son Shah Shuja (the subhedar of Bengal), and his fourth son Murad Baksh (the subhedar of Gujarat). In the Adilshahi, the now dead Mohammad Adil Shah's queen, the Badi Sahiba, her adopted son Ali Adil Shah, and their newly appointed general, Afzal Khan, too, had meaty roles to play. Abdullah Qutb Shah, king of the Qutbshahi kingdom and his Grand *Wazir* Mir Jumla, too, would bask in the limelight of the most interesting period of our history. However, Shivaji was to add another dimension to this story by raising his sword against the mightiest empire of the times, which was backed by a massive army. He was about to challenge destiny!

The *Badshahnama* says that in the 20th year of Shah Jahan's regimen (1647; just before Aurangzeb started his second tenure in the Deccan as a Mughal subhedar), the Mughal cavalry had 1,85,000 horsemen, reporting to 8,000 mansabdars. The imperial army also had 7,000 *ahadis* (horsemen directly under the emperor). The infantry had 40,000 infantrymen, comprising of *tufangchi* (musketeers), *top andaz* (gunners), and *bandars* (rocketeers). 10,000 of these were directly under the emperor while the remaining 30,000 were assigned to various Mughal provinces. The above figures do not include *sihbandis* (garrisons) assigned to administrations in far

flung places and there is no source to get their numbers. The number of orderlies, water-men, labourers, and cooks is also unknown but one can easily say that all in all, the Mughal army must comprise of nearly half a million men by 1648.

It is also interesting to think that when, in 1648, Shivaji's *jagir* had started yielding revenue worth 180 kilograms of gold, how much revenue the gigantic Mughal Empire must be generating? If the Deccan had their jagirdars and watandars, who did the Mughal Empire have to look after the agriculture and collect land revenue, which was the main source of money?

'The annual *jama* of the Mughal empire between 1650 to 1680 can be said to have been around Rs. 220 million. The actual collection or *hasil* is not known but it can be assumed at around Rs. 120 million' (Mehendale, 2011, p. 42).

In those days, with Rs 120 million, the Emperor could have purchased about 90,000 kilograms of gold (*ibid.*, p. 718). If he tried to sell this gold today, he could have made a cool Rs. 23,000 crores or USD 3.5 billion annually!

However, more than 80% of the total Mughal territory was assigned in *jagirs*. This means that only 20% of funds (approx. 700 million USD or about 4,500 crores INR) went straight to the Emperor's treasury.

The Emperor of the Mughals earned that much wealth every year, year after year and hence, he was indeed a rich man. If you factor in inflation, he might have even ended up buying off today's top three richest people in the world. It comes as no surprise then that Emperor Shah Jahan could convert projects like Shahjanabad and Taj Mahal into major successes.

Land revenue formed the main source of money for the Mughal Empire but some percentage of their dues was deducted from the

salaries of the empire's mansabdars[15] who also paid tribute to the Emperor. The Emperor's secondary income came in the form of other taxes and payments. Profession tax was paid by many skilled workers. *Jiziyah* came to be paid by the Hindus (traders and professionals) after Aurangzeb re-imposed it in 1679. Custom duties (import and export) were charged and goods were often charged transit dues as they passed from province to province, while octroi duty was charged in the big cities. Since all mines were owned by the state, these were let out to leaseholders on payment of a fee. There was also some income from mintage, though there was free coinage with this feature that everyone seeking to convert his gold into coins could do it by paying some discount to the mints.

Like all the earlier Mughals, Shah Jahan too had built monuments to leave his mark on the face of this earth, monuments that would make him immortal. Like we talk of smart cities, the Mughals talked

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15 Mansabdars and other officials in the Mughal administration: A large province was called a '*suba*' or '*subha*' and the chief administrator was called '*subadar*'. Many times he was also called as '*sahib-e-suba*'. In Marathi, this word was used as '*subha*' and the chief administrator was called 'subhedar' that was equal to a viceroy. The chief administrator of a sarkar (government) was called the *foujdar* (governer). The Chief Officer of a *paragana* (small province in a *subha*) was called a *thanedar*. Generally, in Mughal administration, all these officers were called mansabdars and were appointed as per the ranks of their '*mansab*'. The subhedar and *foujdar* were high-ranking mansabdars whereas the *thanedar* and his junior officers held a low-ranking *mansab*. Allotment of this *mansab* or *jagir* could be changed or entirely cancelled by the Emperor at any time. Still, this provision was quite convenient for the mansabdars. In a way, they were supposed to be the owners of that particular province and could enjoy it in capacity as a ruler. But this was a post and not a permanent source of income. It was never an inherited allotment. In case some brave or noble mansabdar died in the war or by old age, there was a tradition of 'Mughal Durbar' to continue his *mansab* with his son but there was no guarantee that the same province would be re-allotted to such a successor. He might be allotted a separate area anywhere in the empire, having the equal potentials of his father's *mansab*. Very few examples can be stated of a *mansab* that was offered inheritably. Only Rajput kings availed such honour. Few provinces or paragana were allotted to them (mostly parts of their old kingdoms where their forefathers ruled) as a *jagir*. They were given loafty titles of Raja, Maharaja, and Mirza to name a few.

about smart citadels of the cities. Today we say that in those days Agra and Delhi must have been the most beautiful cities of the world but that was partially correct. Beyond the citadel the cities were a chaotic jungle of wretched hovels and stately mansions, royal avenues and mean, twisting lanes, parodying the transience and awful inequality of Mughal society. In urban planning, it has been downhill in India since the Mauryan age, possibly from the time of the Indus civilization. They (the Mughal cities) appeared very pleasant from afar, for they were adorned with many towers and high buildings, in a very beautiful manner but when one enters them, one finds narrowness, aimlessness and crookedness and ill planning of the streets that deprive these cities of all beauty (Eraly, 2007, p.21).

CHAPTER 4

Political Turmoil

Even though the Mughal Emperor was the richest man, Aurangzeb, as a Mughal subhedar of the Deccan needed funds. At this point, both Shivaji and Aurangzeb wanted to build strong armies. Shivaji hated the idea of bowing down in front of the Muslim Sultans and wanted to free his people from the tyranny of watandars. If he had to pursue his dream he needed to expand his territory to increase land revenue. Aurangzeb, on the other hand, was fed up with his father's mean behaviour. In any case, Shah Jahan was getting old, and was, one day, destined to die. War-of-succession was a certain eventuality and Aurangzeb wanted military power to fight with his brothers.

The valley of Javali was Shivaji's next destination. The facts given in *Sabhasad Bakhar* go like this: Chandrarao, the ruler of the valley, and Mankai's adopted son had forgotten about Shivaji's help and had laid claim to the *deshmukhi* rights of a region in Maval called Gunjan. Chandrarao had also started playing mischief – giving shelter to criminals and harassing revenue collectors from Shivaji's *jagir*. In the beginning, Shivaji tried to communicate with Chandrarao through letters, appealing to him to behave, but Chandrarao questioned Shivaji's authority. There were a few exchanges of messages, and finally Chandrarao sent a rude letter saying that 'he was the king of Javali and should Shivaji enter Javali with his army, not a single man would go back alive'. To this, Shivaji replied, 'Give up Javali, tie

your hands behind your back, and come and kneel before me. If you do not, we shall eliminate you.' Chandrarao replied, 'Why are you waiting? Please come, my cannons are ready to kill you' (Sardesai, 1988, p.166).

A conflict seemed inevitable. This would be Shivaji's first war-of-expansion. Shivaji sent his *vakeel*, Raghunath Ballal Korde, for final negotiations along with a group of armed men. During the meeting Raghunath attacked Chandrarao who fled the scene and vanished, while a group of armed men who had accompanied Raghunath massacred the sentinels guarding Chandrarao's fortress. Meanwhile, Shivaji and his 5,000 men started from Purandar for the hills of Mahabaleshwar, and descended into the valley through the mountain tracks. Some of Chandrarao's squadrons intercepted them and Javali was bathed in blood. That same night, the fortress fell into Shivaji's hands.

Henceforth, Shivaji and his forces occupied Morey's fortress at Javali. Chandrarao's surviving soldiers had been hiding in the surrounding forest and caves. They continued to attack the fortress to loot and plunder. Shivaji ordered the forest be cut down around the fortress and clear the area of about one and half kilometres around the fortress, cutting off the leafy approaches to his abode and pushing the enemy further into the hills. Once the fortress was secured he sent his squadrons in search of the hiding enemy and completely wiped them out. Eventually, Chandrarao's general, who also worked as his *diwan* (administrative manager), called Murarbaji Deshpande, joined Shivaji and went on to become the commandant of Purandar fort. It was here at Javali that Shivaji spotted Jiva Mahalya and was impressed by his swordfighting talents. Mahalya later became Shivaji's personal guard and saved Shivaji from certain death during his famous meeting with Afzal Khan. There is a popular saying in Marathi: '*Hota Jiva mhanoon vachla Shiva*', which translates to 'because of Jiva, Shiva was saved!'

After fleeing, Chandrarao was hiding in a fort called Rairi at the northern edge of the valley, but was later captured and killed, and thousands of his soldiers eventually joined Shivaji. Chandrarao's brother Prataprao escaped and fled to Bijapur. Immediately thereafter, Shivaji roamed the terrain of Javali with his chief advisor, Moro Trimbak Pingle[16] (who later became his Peshwa or the prime minister). Shivaji found a suitable hill called Bhorpya, 145 kilometres south of Pune, to build a fort. It was a flat-topped, rocky hill, rising more than a thousand metres above sea-level, at the head of the densely forested Koyna basin. The construction of the fort was entrusted to Pingle. Together, they planned a double line of fortification (also called umbilical defence) and walls on all sides, their heights changing according to the nature of the ground. A double line of fortification meant that if the invaders broke one wall and tried to enter by force, guards waiting on the ramparts of the other wall could jump on the unsuspecting invaders and kill them. Amazingly, provisions were made for toilets on the ramparts so that night guards did not leave their place for a long time. The upper fort or citadel was planned across the northern and western crest of the hill measuring about 2000 square feet. The lower fort was planned on the southern and the eastern terraces with walls and bastions at corners on projecting spurs. Things like rain water harvesting with manmade lakes were also in the blueprint. This was the first fort built by Shivaji and it was named Pratapgad – the fort of valour. The money found in Morey's treasury was put to use. The question was why did Shivaji build Pratapgad in a place that was already inaccessible? What was he trying to protect? What was his return on investment? Interestingly, it indeed served its purpose and gave a lot more in return than the money spent on it.

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[16] Moro Trimbak Pingle's father worked for Raja Shahaji Bhosale in Karnataka. In the year 1653 Moro Pingle came to Pune to serve Shivaji. A good military strategist, linguist and a good politician, Pingle was also a scholar of fort architecture (Sardesai, 1988, p.168).

After the conquest of Javali and recruitement from the Morey's forces, Shivaji's army must have swelled – reaching 10,000 horsemen and an equal number of footmen. The agricultural land in his possession had also increased. He was now set to change the rules that oppressed the farmers. Shivaji's first reform was to reduce the power of the watandars, (especially the Deshmukhs, Desh-kulkarnis). In his system, both the watandars and the peasants were made to report to his administrative officers (appointed on merit). He also demolished the strongholds like the walled fortress of the watandars and prohibited them from building new ones, thus weakening their invincibility. Even after Shivaji's officers took power in their hands, the watandars continued to stay put in their territories but as he went on acquiring new terrain the jagirdars had to leave. Eventually, Shivaji abolished the *jagirdari* system. Every employee (civil or military) was paid directly from his treasury. This was the most revolutionary change Shivaji brought in, thus removing the shackles of the rigid, old structure that threatened the central power. The administration remained somewhat similar to the old system though. The chief of a *paragana* (province, which was the highest administrative unit in Adilshahi) was under an administrative officer called the Havaldar, and his accounting officer was Muzumdar. Within a few years, after taking over some of the Mughal territory in north Maharashtra, Shivaji adopted some Mughal patterns. He created a higher unit called the *subha*, each containing a number of *paraganas*. The Maratha *subhas* were not as massive as Mughal *subhas* but were equal in size to Mughal *sarkars* – Mughal *subhas* were further divided into *sarkars*. Shivaji appointed subhedars to look after the administration and defence of these *subhas*. All these officers were required to take military expeditions in times of need.

The old system of collection of land revenue was based on visual inspection before harvesting of the fields. A lot depended on the whims and fancies of the visual inspectors and the problems faced

by the cultivators were not taken into consideration. Unavailability of cattle and good quality seeds for sowing were major hurdles. Cattle provided manure, helped plough the fields, drew water from wells, and played an important role in loosening grains from chaff by walking over them. Without a pair of oxen it was almost impossible to farm. The peasants had to part with half and sometimes more than half of their produce as revenue, and many times in cash. They could barely survive if the rain played spoilsport or they lost their cattle to disease or robbery. At times, peasants had to borrow oxen by paying hefty sums. When the revenue was collected in cash the cultivators were traumatised since selling the produce soon after harvesting, in grain-flooded markets, fetched very little money.

Shivaji went to the root of these problems to help the peasants. He insisted that the revenue be collected only in kind and not in cash. He built storehouses to store grains that were collected as revenue and encouraged his officers to follow his guidelines for the proper time to sell so that the grains did not get spoilt and yet received the best prices. He asked his administrative officers to go from village to village before the sowing season started and help the farmers with seeds, cattle and tools on loans that were to be recovered gradually.

Even Shivaji's soldiers were instructed to treat the peasants with care. They were paid regularly so they would not harass the farmers for food and fodder. Each horse required 5-7 kilograms of fodder everyday to survive. Imagine if one had to feed a contingent containing 10,000 horses! Overfeeding was dangerous too, because the fodder would finish early. Shivaji made sure that every war animal's fodder was organised by the state and the amount of fodder was carefully calculated. He was strict about how his troopers behaved with civilians who might be tempted to snatch food and fodder from them. This is evident from a letter he wrote to his military men in

the summer of 1671. The following is a translation[17] of the letter (Kulkarni, 1999, pp.47–49):

'*If you and your men are not careful in feeding your war animals, all the grains and fodder will finish before the rainy season. Without food your war-horses will start dying, and you will be responsible for their pointless deaths. Some of you, the military men of the Maratha army may start harassing nearby peasants for grains, fodder,* jawar rotis, *firewood, vegetables, etc. and if that happens, the peasants, who are already struggling with life will flee, or start dying of hunger. The* ryot *may say that the Mughal raids are better than the harassment by the Maratha army. Tell the men under you – whether they are horsemen or footmen that they have to be extremely careful and not to trouble the* ryot *at any cost. If they need supplies they must go to the market and buy, since they are paid directly from our treasury for such expenses. Also warn your men that they must argue with the clerks of our treasury for more. Many of the horsemen and footmen will burn* chullahs *to cook dinner, and they must do so far away from the peasant's barns. This is summer and even a light breeze may carry the flames to the piled-up hay – burning the barn and even nearby homes of peasants to cinders.*

They must not keep a lamp burning when they sleep as rats may come for the wick and carry it to the barns – setting fire to them. If these things happen, remember, everything will be destroyed, the trust of the peasants, the food for our horses and even our horses – this will be the end of our army – and our military men that is you and your men. I want the news from all of you on a daily basis about the "ground zero" situation.'

Aurangzeb's game plan

While the Javali episode was unfolding in western Deccan in February of 1656, something equally interesting was happening

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17 Translated by author.

in eastern Deccan. For a long time, Aurangzeb was contemplating to annex the Qutbshahi for funds to strengthen his army and was waiting for an opportunity. It came in the form of Mir Jumla!

Mir Jumla, the Grand *Wazir* of the Qutbshahi Sultanate had joined hands with Aurangzeb. Other than being the Prime Minister of the Qutbshahi, he was also an enormously rich jagirdar, his *jagir* yielding 4 million rupees in revenue per year (when Shivaji's *jagir* was yielding only 250,000 rupees). That was not all – Mir Jumla was an artillery expert and owned several diamond mines in the Kollur district of Andhra, and had become a world famous diamond merchant. His private, well-mounted cavalry of 5,000 had pushed the southern boundaries of his kingdom by annexing many temple cities. The king of Qutbshahi, Abdullah Qutb Shah was becoming wary of Mir Jumla's wealth and military strength. Once, when Mir Jumla had gone to Bengal on business, Mir Jumla's son, a totally drunk Amin went to the king's court and urinated on the carpet. The king promptly arrested Amin and threw him in the dungeons of Golconda Fort near his capital Hyderabad and sacked Mir Jumla.

Mir Jumla promptly joined Aurangzeb along with his army. Hyderabad was attacked and the Qutbshahi's 17,000 troopers were slain and the city was captured and plundered. Aurangzeb and his maternal uncle Shaista Khan, who was the then the subhedar of Malwa, arrived in Hyderabad with fresh reinforcements and were going to besiege the fort. Aurangzeb was about to take over a rich Deccan Sultanate that exported diamonds, high quality iron ore, chintz and carpets all over the world. Just then Aurangzeb received an official decree, a *farman* from Shah Jahan saying that he must retreat, since the tributary states were under the Empire's protection. That was a big blow to Aurangzeb, but before he retreated he asked for Abdullah Qutb Shah's daughter for his son Mohammad Sultan and extracted tribute as well as the fort of Ramgir and the land

around it, yielding a revenue of 600,000 rupees a year from the king. Aurangzeb realised it was easy and profitable to battle with the southern kingdoms.

Mohammad Adil Shah passed away in 1656. Aurangzeb did not waste time, but he needed his father Emperor Shah Jahan's approval to annex the Adilshahi. He played brilliant politics by sending Mir Jumla to Agra with 1 million rupees and loads of diamonds for Emperor Shah Jahan. Mir Jumla won the Emperor's heart and was given the coveted post of *Mir Atish*, the artillery chief of the Mughal army. He also convinced Shah Jahan to allow Aurangzeb to open offensives against the Adilshahi. Within a few months, Mir Jumla was back to Aurangabad with reinforcements of 20,000. Aurangzeb cleverly raised a 'pious cry' about late Mohammad Adil Shah's adopted son Ali and his ancestry – was Ali a slave-girl's child or was he a lowborn child? How could the queen adopt him since adoption was not allowed in Islam? This was the reason, he announced, he wanted to wipe out the Adilshahi. He was clearly using Islam as a weapon or an excuse for war. Later in life, to show Sunni supremacy, Aurangzeb never failed to put abusive adjectives like *ghul-i-bayabani* (corpse-eating-demons) and *batil-mazhaban* (misbelievers) for Shias in his correspondence (Bahadur, 1925).

'The Emperor had given Aurangzeb two alternative objects for the campaign: to annex the entire Adilshahi Sultanate if possible, or else take the former Nizamshahi territory that had fallen to the lot of the Adilshah by the treaty of 1636, as well as tribute of Rs. 10 million for the Emperor and Rs. 5 million for Aurangzeb' (Mehendale, 2011, p.162).

Aurangzeb now planned an attack on Bidar, the northeastern stronghold of Adilshahi. He, along with Shaista Khan and Mir Jumla set off for Bidar, 300 kilometres away from the Adilshahi capital of Bijapur. Within a month they would ruin Bidar and

take over the Bidar Fort. The city of Bidar was on a high plateau, more than 600 metres above sea-level. It was enclosed in a 40-feet high wall that was 4 kilometres in circumference. Three separate moats cut in rock, more than 70 feet wide and 50 feet deep protected the citadel that had mosques, palaces, Turkish baths, and arsenal storehouses. The only entrance to the citadel was a zigzag passage that passed through several gates protected by bastions strengthened by massive cannons. One of Adilshahi's able military generals, Siddi Marjan had defended the city for 30 long years and had gathered 1,000 horsemen, 4,000 footmen, and hundreds of musketeers and gunners. Mir Jumla's modern and light artillery demolished the wall and bastions. When Siddi Marjan and his sons were standing near a bastion ready to retaliate, a rocket from the Mughal landed where explosives were stored. There was an explosion, Siddi Marjan suffered severe burns and lay dying while Mughal soldiers entered the citadel, slaughtering the civilians. Marjan's heartbroken men fled. Thus, the stronghold of Bidar, hitherto regarded as invincible throughout India, fell into the hands of Aurangzeb after a siege of only 27 days. 'Among the spoils of victory were 12 lakhs of rupees (1.2 million) in cash, 8 lakhs worth of powder, shot, grain and other stores, besides 230 pieces of cannon' (Sarkar, 1912, pp.267-268).

Was this a threat, or an opportunity, or both for Shivaji? It is amazing to know how he played his politics in such a volatile situation to come a step closer to his dream of *swaraj*. By then, Shivaji was considered a notorious criminal and his Javali takeover was considered an unlawful act by many. Even Sir Jadunath Sarkar, respected historian and one of Shivaji's staunch admirers writes in his book that the acquisition of Javali was the result of deliberate murder and organised treachery on the part of Shivaji (Sarkar, 2007, p.33). One simple question nags though, if Shivaji's Javali takeover was unlawful, was Aurangzeb's plunder of Hyderabad and ruin of Bidar lawful?

Political moves

Here occurs a fascinating twist to history – Sonoji Dabir, from Shivaji's advisory committee, travelled hundreds of kilometres from Pune to meet Aurangzeb when he was camping in the trenches dug around Bidar. He had come with a proposal: Shivaji wanted formal recognition of his right over his *jagir* and all of the Adilshahi hill-forts under his control. Shivaji had also requested for an official nod from Aurangzeb to allow him to annex Adilshahi's ports in Konkan. If this was done, Shivaji, as an independent regent, would help the Mughals defeat Adil Shah. At the time of the meeting between Aurangzeb and Sonoji Dabir, Bidar was already ruined, its protective, kilometres-long wall had collapsed and many buildings had turned into rubble. Sonoji Dabir's proposal was heard and all Aurangzeb did was give evasive replies. Later he did send an arrogant letter to Shivaji. '*Well might Aurangzeb exult over such a victory. Well might he boast to Shivaji, "The fort of Bidar, which was accounted impregnable, and which is the key to the conquest of the Deccan and Karnatak, has been captured by me in one day, both fort and town, which was scarcely to have been expected without one year's fighting*" (Sarkar, 1912, p.268).

It was 1657. Immediately after the Bidar takeover, Aurangzeb and his army moved deeper into the Adilshahi's southeastern territory, erasing villages after villages from the face of the earth, setting fires to houses and barns, and leaving behind barren fields without a trace of tillage. The Adilshahi's Grand *Wazir*, Khan Mohammad and his military officers (including Afzal Khan) could not stand the onslaught of the war-hardened soldiers of Aurangzeb. The Adilshahi army had to flee the battlegrounds and retreat, leaving arms, horses, artillery equipment, explosives, oxen and other materials, and these 'left-in-distress' goods were promptly taken by the Mughals as spoils-of-war. Unbeknownst to the war generals from both sides, a scandalous political intrigue for power was taking place in the Adilshahi camp. Afzal Khan and his men had sneaked out of

the battleground and headed for Bijapur to meet Ali Adil Shah. During the meeting at Ali Adil Shah's seven-storey Gagan Mahal (sky palace), Afzal Khan told his king that the Grand *Wazir*, Khan Mohammad was a traitor and had set free a trapped Aurangzeb and allowed him to flee. Upon hearing this, without verifying the facts, Ali called Khan Mohammad back on the pretext of discussing war strategies. When Khan Mohammad and his guards entered Bijapur late in the night, they were attacked by trained assassins. Khan Mohammad was slain and his body was cut into several pieces, bathing the path that went up to the palace of the king with the blood of a loyal African warrior.

At that time Bijapur was surrounded by a deep moat filled with water, infested with crocodiles. The surrounding, kilometres long wall was massive and strong, about 30-40 feet high and 20 feet wide. It was fortified with continuous ramparts and 96 bastions, not counting 10 at the various gates. The ramparts were protected by battlemented curtain walls from the inside, and were designed for artillery and small arms. Above the various gates, the platforms enclosed with battlemented walls were always guarded by archers. The enormous doors at the gates were made of thick wooden beams, fastened together by iron clamps, strengthened by massive bars and bristling with long steel spikes. At the eastern edge of the city enormous timber scaffoldings rose as if to touch the sky. A mausoleum was being constructed for the past 15 years that had the largest dome in the entire world. The structure was Mohammad Adil Shah's tomb which was not completed even after his death. A giant cannon, called Malik-e-Maidan weighing 50,000 kilograms mounted on huge stone was the pride of Bijapur. Its muzzle was shaped like a lion's head, whose open jaw crushed an iron elephant to death. This cannon ejected cannonballs weighing more than 100 kilograms and could smash the approaching enemy a kilometre away. The city had countless mosques, temples, gardens, beautifully constructed water wells, multi-storey buildings, the skyline crowded

with minarets and domes. The king's palace had a massive arch in the front and the palace itself had risen seven storeys above the ground. It was called the Gagan Mahal, the sky palace. But its new king, Ali Adil Shah, was a young man of twenty. He and his mother Badi Sahiba were mortally scared of the Mughal army that was destroying their kingdom and advancing in the direction of their beloved Bijapur, invading their home.

Something far more shocking was about to take place in the western Deccan. After his envoy, Sonoji Dabir was back from Bidar, Shivaji planned to do something that had never happened before in the history of India. While the Mughal army was foraging deeper to come near Bijapur, Shivaji and his men attacked the southwestern borders of the empire. He and thousands of his men crossed the Bhima River, entered Mughal terrain, and galloped northwards, to reach Junnar, the then famous market and trading centre. Their horses flew, cutting through forests at the foothills of Shivaneri fort, Shivaji's birthplace, looming over them. One wonders if the hill looked at its own child with astonishment, wondering what he was up to.

The Mughals had turned smug and believed that they were invincible. It was not surprising then that not a single archer guarded the ramparts of the protective walls of Junnar. At midnight on 30 April, 1657, the Marathas coolly scaled the walls with the help of catapults and hooks, ropes and ladders, and eliminated the guards who were probably snoring, or drunk. At the end of the night, Shivaji and his men carried away 300,000 *hons* (each made of 3.3 grams of pure gold) that is equal to 1.3 million rupees (each made of 11 grams of pure silver), in cash. They also took with them 200 Arabian horses, loads of jewellery and bells of cloth, all in a night's work! Thereafter, the Marathas stayed put in the Mughal region, plundering village after village, doing exactly the same as what Aurangzeb was doing on a large scale in the Adilshahi. The only difference was that the

Marathas did not resort to abduction and arson – no woman was taken and no woman was touched.

The Maratha contingents under the leadership of chieftans Minaji and Kashirao went deeper in the imperial terrain and reached the very gates of Ahmednagar fort, the erstwhile capital of Nizamshahi. Since the news of the Maratha attack had already reached Multafat Khan, the Mughal *qiledar* of Ahmednagar fort, Multafat was prepared. He organised a timely sortie of the fort garrison, and the Marathas were driven off. Nevertheless, Shivaji's men had managed to strike terror in the hearts of the merchants frequenting these markets, bringing trading activity in those parts to a standstill. Why did Shivaji do what he did? Challenging the Mughal was akin to committing hara-kiri, political or otherwise. Even Shia kingdoms of the Deccan had never done something like that before.

Shivaji was a strategist and knew the perils of raising his sword against the Empire. Aurangzeb's vague promises as well as his letter full of arrogance had created doubts in Shivaji's mind, whose decisions were never taken on impulse or for the sake of petty reprisals. He must have known through his sources that before Aurangzeb marched to Bidar, Shah Jahan had given Aurangzeb two alternatives – either annex Adilshahi or make a new treaty asking for the entire Nizamshahi territory that had been received by Adilshahi in the older treaty of 1636, along with a tribute that ran into millions of rupees. Shahaji Bhosale's *jagir* in the Pune region was in the territory that Adilshahi had received out of old Nizamshahi. The *jagir* was controlled by Shivaji who had not only stopped reporting to the king of Adilshahi, but had also raised his sword against the king.

The Adilshahi king, Ali Adil Shah and his mother, Badi Sahiba were living the horrors of Aurangzeb's invasion. The Mughal armies had gone further south, into the province of Gulbarga, and soon were expected to reach the gates of Bijapur. Trouble was brewing

at the other borders too. Their jagirdar's son, Shivaji himself, had captured the valley of Javali and slaughtered its ruler Morey by deceit. He was also building a hill-fort in the middle of the valley. From there, they suspected that he may be planning to expand his territory by invading the province of Wai, their kingdom's western frontiers.

In such a disastrous situation the possibility of Ali Adil Shah signing the new treaty with the Mughals was indeed there. There was talk about Adil Shah agreeing to surrender the old Nizamshahi territory including the Bhosale *jagir* as well as the Nizamshahi Konkan or north Konkan in his possession but also pay 15 million rupees in tribute. In such a case, Shivaji would have been alienated (as his father was during the first treaty signed in 1636). Shivaji now wanted to show the young Ali that the Mughals were not an invincible force and their territory was not beyond invasions. As Mehendale (2011, pp.166–167) rightly puts it, 'Shivaji's forays into Mughal territory must therefore have been prompted by the intelligence he must have received about not only the Adilshahi efforts to make peace, but also the terms and conditions upon which the Adilshah was prepared to make a compromise. It would have harmed Shivaji's interests in no way at all had the Adilshahi noblemen, emboldened and encouraged enough by his offensive against the Mughals, decided to continue the war with them. In fact, a continuation of the war between the Adilshah and the Mughals was distinctly to Shivaji's advantage. Moreover, had a treaty been signed on the terms discussed above, a conflict with the Mughals to preserve his own freedom was going to become inevitable.'

Under the current political situation when the Mughals were trying to swallow the Adilshahi, which included the Bhosale *jagir*, Shivaji had very few options and one of them was to swallow his pride and accept the suzerainty of the Mughals. But that was not acceptable to Shivaji and Aurangzeb was not ready to accept him as

an independent regent. If Shivaji had become a Mughal mansabdar, they might have taken away his old *jagir* and given him a new one somewhere in the north. In that case he would have lost all his hill-forts and everything he had so painstakingly built over the years. Given his past, even as their mansabdar they would have considered him potentially dangerous and might have sent him to the empire's northwestern or northeastern borders, either in the perilous hilly regions around Bolan and Khybar pass or in the forests beyond Assam infested with tribesmen practicing cannibalism. Because that is what they did when they wanted to tame or get rid of too-powerful-for-comfort mansabdars.

In such a chaotic situation it was advantageous to Shivaji if instead of signing a treaty with the Mughals the Adilshahi king earnestly kept resisting the Mughals. As Sun Tzu says, 'In the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity'.

What would actually happen only time would tell. But there was no stopping Shivaji now. Even if it meant defying his father, who had appointed Tukabai's brother Mohite to mind the Supe *paragana*. Shivaji and his men attacked Supe sometime in 1657, and captured Mohite. Later, Mohite was sent back to Bangalore, to Shahaji Bhosale. Nothing is mentioned in any history book about Shahaji Bhosale's reaction to his son's defiance.

Two princes are born

As the wars and plunders went on in the Deccan, two things happened in the middle of 1657: a son – his first – was born to Shivaji from his wife Sayee Bai at Purandar, and a son was born to Aurangzeb from his wife Dilras Banu at Aurangabad. Shivaji's son was named Sambhaji, in the memory of Shivaji's slain brother, and Aurangzeb's son was named Akbar, in the memory of his great-great grandfather, Emperor Akbar.

Shivaji had eight wives and he was married off to some of them when he was just a young boy. All the girls were from well-known Maratha watandar families and their names were Sayee Bai, Soyara Bai, Saguna Bai, Putala Bai, Lakshmi Bai, Sakwar Bai, Kashi Bai and Gunwanti Bai. He had two sons and six daughters from them. Aurangzeb had four wives, Dilras Banu (Persian, Shia Muslim), Nawab Bai (Kashmiri Hindu, later converted to Islam), Aurangabadi Mahal (Muslim), Udepuri Mahal (who was Dara Shukoh's concubine, some say she was a Georgian slave girl). He had four sons and five daughters from them.

Aurangzeb was very disturbed by the news of the Maratha attack, and for good reason. It was a question of the perception of the people of India that imperial territory was sacred. Shiva Bhosale was showing them – especially the warrior Rajputs, Bundelas, Sikhs and the Jats – dangerous possibilities. Aurangzeb immediately ordered Rao Karna, Hoshar, Nasiri Khan, Kartalab Khan and Iraj Khan, his mansabdars, along with their 5,000 cavalry to proceed to Ahmednagar and drive away the Marathas. Aurangzeb also ordered them to enter Shivaji's *jagir* to destroy all the villages without restraint, to slaughter as well as enslave the civilians. Aurangzeb had further commanded to hurt the enemy, maul him in such a way that all he would do was lick his wounds. Break him so badly that he would never be able to even think of entering the imperial terrain again in his life. Aurangzeb's military officers did drive away the Marathas, killing and wounding many, but it was impossible for them to enter Shivaji's hilly *jagir* since the monsoon had arrived – rains lashing the hills and flooding the rivers in the valleys. In such weather conditions it was not possible for the Mughals to launch large-scale operations against Shivaji. They had to wait until the end of the monsoon season.

At the end of monsoon, news was to arrive from the north that would suddenly bring a change to the politics of the Deccan.

Emperor Shah Jahan's illness

Despite Shivaji proving that the Mughals were not invincible, by the end of the monsoons Ali Adil Shah signed the treaty in 1657 with the Mughals and made peace. As his very purpose of attacking the Mughal terrain was lost, Shivaji, too, had started sending letters to Nasiri Khan and the others who were unleashed by Aurangzeb to annihilate him, offering submission.

Something else was going on in Aurangzeb's life as well. Emperor Shah Jahan had fallen ill in Delhi just after he had sanctioned the treaty between the Mughals and the Adilshahi. Two things happened in quick succession – Dara Shukoh established direct contact with Ali Adil Shah and his mother asking them to send the tribute money of 15 million rupees directly to Agra (out of which 5 million actually belonged to Aurangzeb), and Emperor Shah Jahan's *farman* arrived asking Aurangzeb to stay put at Bidar and to send all the reinforcements back. Conflicting reports about Shah Jahan's health had started filtering in from Aurangzeb's envoys at Agra. The Emperor was brought back to Agra from Delhi and was kept in quarantine, and only Dara Shukoh, Jahanara and some medics were allowed to go into the sick man's chamber. There was news about Dara Shukoh consolidating his army by calling mansabdars from different Mughal provinces along with their armies to Agra. Many of Aurangzeb's own men were called back, including Mir Jumla. Aurangzeb was not sure whether his father was dead or just bedridden. The question was, if Shah Jahan had died, who was then sending *farmans* to him in his father's name? Was it a ploy to keep him away from Agra? Should he proceed to Agra? But if Shah Jahan was alive and well, such a move would prove disastrous. Aurangzeb would be accused of impulsive behaviour, and might lose the confidence of orthodox noblemen who hated Dara Shukoh for his liberal views.

On 18 October, 1657 Aurangzeb received a coded message from one of his men stationed at Agra saying that Emperor Shah Jahan

was indeed on his deathbed and Dara Shukoh, who was regarded as the crown prince was now in command. Aurangzeb understood in a flash, Dara was trying to keep him away until he accumulated enough soldiers and had the wherewithal to fight Aurangzeb. He immediately got in touch with his other brothers but only Murad Baksh seemed to have taken the correspondence seriously. The brothers had discovered each other after many years, their hate for Dara Shukoh being the binding factor. But their plans now took definite shape in the shadow of the Emperor's approaching death. Curiously enough, on almost the same date (sometime in October 1657) both brothers suddenly remembered that they had not corresponded with each other for a long time past; their brotherly love welled; and each wrote to the other a letter mentioning in a neutral tone the news of Shah Jahan's illness. But each letter was carried by a confidential messenger who was charged with certain oral communications that were unsafe to put on paper. The two letters crossed each other on the way. Murad also wrote a letter to Shuja proposing an alliance, and it was sent through Aurangzeb's province, who helped the courier to proceed to Bengal and entrusted to him a letter of his own to the same purport (Sarkar, 1925, p.327).

Aurangzeb had to find an excuse to leave Bidar. The excuse came in the form of sad news – Aurangzeb's wife Dilras Banu had passed away at Aurangabad, while giving birth to their fifth child[18]. Now he had a valid reason to overrule the imperial *farman*. He arrived at his destination on 11 November, 1657 and met his grieving children, but his focus was on getting information from Agra. Not knowing

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18 Aurangzeb had many children. His principal wife, Dilras Banu bore him five children, Zeb-un-nissa, Zeenat-un-nissa, Zabdat-un-nissa, Mohammad Azam and Mohammad Akbar. Aurangzeb's Hindu wife Nawab Bai bore him Mohammad Sultan, Mohammad Muazzam, and Badar-un-nissa. Aurangabadi Mahal bore him Mihr-un-nissa and Udepuri bore him Mohammad Kam Baksh.

what exactly to do Aurangzeb started writing letters to his loyalists and also orthodox mansabdars who hated Dara. There was more news – his brothers, the fourth and the youngest, Murad Baksh (the then subhedar of Gujarat), and the second, Shah Shuja (the then subhedar of Bengal), had openly crowned themselves in Gujarat and Bengal respectively. Hearing this, Aurangzeb suffered from severe anxiety and acute depression, but soon he controlled himself, and decided to play an extraordinarily clever political game.

Murad was anyway coaxing Aurangzeb through letters to take quick action so that they could join forces and kill their *mulhid* (idolater) brother Dara and save the empire from being ruled by the 'enemy of Islam'. Aurangzeb was not certain since Murad was impulsive and a drunkard. Something changed Aurangzeb's mind, though. By 24 November, 1657, he learnt that Dara had decided to send the imperial army against Shuja who was advancing from Bengal. That meant that Dara was gearing up for war against his brothers. Aurangzeb immediately wrote to Murad Baksh agreeing to join hands.

An excerpt from one of the letters Aurangzeb had written to Murad Baksh reads (Sarkar; 1925, p.336): '*My virtuous aim is to uproot the bigotry and infidelity from the realm of Islam and to eliminate the man who practices both. I need your help, and my brother, precious as my own heart, has joined me in this pious endeavour; he has strengthened my faith, which will be made stronger by promises and oaths. After crushing the enemy of Islam and the empire, my brother, you will be given help in any manner, at all times and places, and in all works, you will be my companion and partner, the friend of my friends, the foe of my foes, and will not ask for any land besides the portion of Imperial dominions that will be left to you at your request. I announce that, so long as you do not display any (conduct) opposed to oneness of aim, oneness of heart, and truthfulness, my love and favour to you will increase day by day. I shall consider our losses and gains as alike, and at all times and under all conditions I shall help you, I shall favour you even more than now,*

after my object has been gained and the Godforsaken Idolater has been overthrown.'

Meanwhile, Shivaji ordered Raghunath, the *vakeel* to go on a diplomatic mission to meet Aurangzeb.

Through his spies, news of the Emperor's illness had reached Shivaji too and he knew that Aurangzeb would not be interested in holding the Adilshahi at ransom now, as more dire things were about to engage him in the north. Calm would return to the Deccan; but peace at the Adilshahi's northeastern borders might bring war at its western borders. The king of Adilshahi, Ali Adil Shah would have time to open offensives against Shivaji. There was only one way to survive, and that was to press Aurangzeb to make him an independent regent of the Mughals if possible.

Aurangzeb did grant a meeting but he dismissed Raghunath with evasive answers and wrote a warning letter to Ali Adil Shah, ordering him to contain Shivaji. Aurangzeb also promised Ali that he would waive off some of the tribute money due to the Mughal Empire, provided Ali Adil Shah helped him by giving 10,000 cavalrymen. In the same letter, Aurangzeb reminded Ali about the treaty and asked him to stick by it. In any case, sensing trouble, the Adilshahi army started disregarding the recent treaty and commenced attacks on the retreating Mughal army to take back the regions captured by them. It was indeed a chaotic situation.

Aurangzeb was not bothered about the Deccan any more now. His focus was Hindustan, and the Mughal throne. The stakes were high. He knew that after his father's death, out of the four of them (Dara, Shuja, Aurangzeb and Murad) only one would become the Emperor and the others would be beheaded by some lowly slave who would then take the decapitated heads to the new Emperor, who would first ensure that the head was not made of wax by forking out some flesh, followed by allowing it to be kicked around and let roll on the carpets of the court. Children and wives of the unfortunate

princes would either be killed or thrown in the dungeons infested with venomous snakes on purpose. Some were destined to end up in Gwalior fort that was mounted on an inaccessible rock, famous for killing political prisoners with *poust* (opium). Aurangzeb knew it all too well, how the poppy seeds were crushed, how the mass was soaked in the water overnight, how a large cup of that narcotic was brought to the wretched prisoners early in the morning, how it was forced down their throats, and how nothing was given to them to eat till they swallowed the last drop. He had seen how within days the strong and healthy men became feeble, and then slowly started losing their minds. As the weeks went by their body went into a spasm, they stayed awake in the nights rolling in their own vomit. Within months they started having fits, followed by loss of consciousness and death.

The prince who had survived the ordeal by killing or maiming or blinding or poisoning his brothers, half-brothers and cousins, would become the Mughal Emperor, the head of the most powerful empire that was founded by Zahir ud-Din Muhammad Babur more than a century ago, celebrating his coronation with pompous glamour, showing off the empire's wealth and military strength. Such a ceremony would dazzle people so much that their logic ceased to exist, burying their minds into graves of amnesia, forgetting the recent murders and assassinations of the other princes. All would vouch for the new Emperor, the supreme commander of the empire's military and civil military, court and civil administration. He would possess absolute authority, and to challenge him would be treason, punishable only by death. The peacock throne would be his seat of power and the other emblems like the golden umbrella (*chhatra*), gilded globes (*kawakaba*), badge of a fan (*sayaban*), flags (*alam*), insignia of sun (*shamsah*) and many other royal symbols would be his exclusive imperial right. No one else in the world but he would be allowed to conduct a *jharouka-e-darshan*, the ritual of appearing

in the balcony to take salute at the march past, to show himself to his subjects and see them perform *kurnish*[19] with his own eyes. The sign of Islamic legitimacy, the *kutba* would be read in his name in all the thousands of mosques in the empire. Until he remained at the helm of his empire, he would always enjoy a special relationship with Allah and that would put him above the status of other mortal humans.

[19] The individual who had the privilege of attending the *durbar* acknowledged the sovereign by performing the *kurnish*, the placement of the palm of the right hand on the forehead and bending the head downwards. The *kurnish* 'signified that the saluter has placed his head (which is the seat of the senses and the mind) into the hand of humility, giving it to the royal assembly as a present, and has made himself in obedience ready for any service that may be required of him. The officers coming to court had audience at the durbar, promotions and appointments were announced, and officers and others presented and received gifts on these occasions. Contemporary historians, scholars and literary writers depicted the Mughal emperors as shadows of God on earth whose authority to rule was a divine right, inherited in a line of descent from the first four *Caliphs* to Amir Timur and his successors (Shivram, 2012, pp.20).

CHAPTER 5

An Impossible Dream

After Javali, Shivaji's next destination was the coastal strip of the Konkan. The natural division of Maharashtra is the coast called the Konkan, the mountain plateau called Desh and the Western Ghats (mountain trails) that join the Konkan and the Desh. The coastal strip (also called the Tal Konkan or low Konkan) runs about 500 kilometres along the breathtaking emerald waters of the Arabian Sea, its width ranging from about 50 to 80 kilometres.

AR Kulkarni (1996) has described medieval Konkan very precisely. From the coastal strip rise the near-vertical cliffs of the Sahyadri Mountains over a thousand metres, only to gradually taper off in the eastern direction. There were a few ghats (Map 2) or mountain trails in this range to communicate between important ports of Konkan and the cities flourishing on the Deccan plateau. These ghats were also responsible for dividing the Konkan in different districts, namely Thane, Kolaba (Raigad) and Ratnagiri (Ratnagiri in the north and Sindhudurg in the south)[20].

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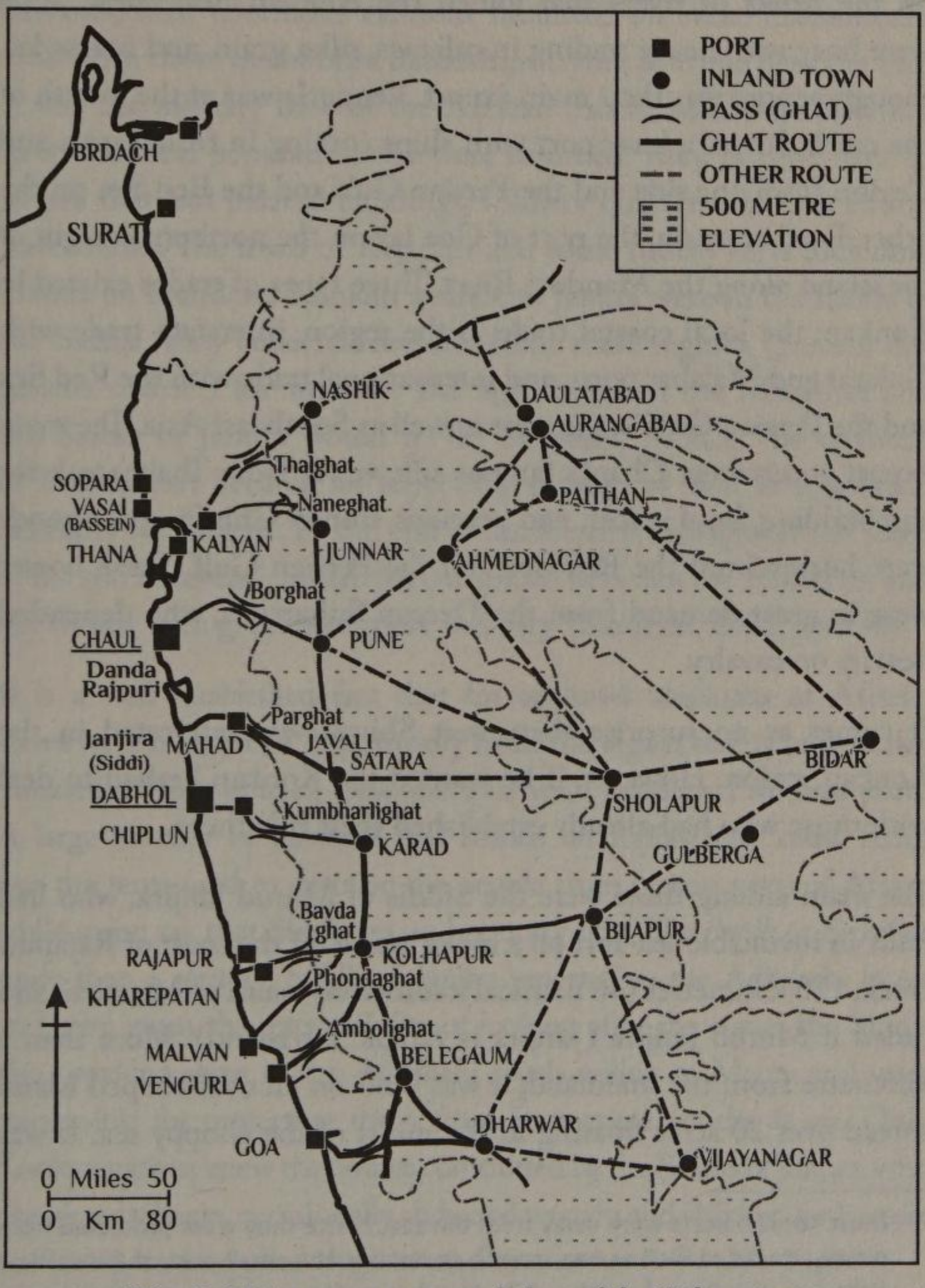
[20] Some important ghats: In Thane, Thalghat joined the ports of Sopara and nearby Vasai (Bassein) to Nasik, and Naneghat connected parts of Kalyan and Thane to the market city of Junnar. In Kolaba, parts of Chaul could be reached through Borghat from Pune while Mahad through Parghat from Satara. In Ratnagiri, ports of Dabhol and Chiplun were connected through Kumbharlighat to Karad near Satara. Ports of Rajapur and Kharepatan lay on the route through Phondaghat and Bavdaghat while Malvan and Vengurla were linked to Belgaum (now in Karnataka) through Ambolighat.



Map 2. Major towns, ports and ghats of the 17th century

Konkan ports[21] were the backbone of export and import. They were on the banks of rivers that joined the Arabian Sea. These ports were busy with heavy trading in calicoes, silks, grain, and coarse lac, though pepper was their main export. Vengurla was at the mouth of the creek. It was a busy port with ships coming in from Japan and Ceylon from one side and the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea on the other. Further south, the port of Goa lay on the northern margin of the island along the Mandovi River. Three types of trades existed in Konkan: the local coastal trade in the region, interstate trade with Gujarat and Malabar ports, and international trade with the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf in the west as well as Southeast Asia. The main export goods were Chaul's famous silk, velvet from Thane, teak for shipbuilding, local spices, and precious stones. Chief import goods were horses from the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. These horses were in great demand from the Deccan Sultanates, who depended heavily on cavalry.

It comes as no surprise then, that Shivaji was interested in the Konkan region. However, if he wanted the Konkan he had to deal with those who had already established their rule there.

The main among these were the Siddis of Murud Janjira, who had built an invincible sea-fort on a rocky island off the coast of Rajapuri creek, 170 kilometres (46 nautical kilometres) south of Mumbai, and called it Murud Janjira (Janjira is Arabic for island). More than a kilometre from the mainland, it was built on an oval-shaped island spread over 20 acres floating in the midst of the choppy sea. It was

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21 Most Konkan ports were away from the sea, hence they were protected from pirate attacks as well as sea storms. In Kolaba, the small port of Panvel was sitting on the Panvel creek, while Chaul, a major port for centuries was on the banks of the Kundalini River or Roha creek. In the district of Ratnagiri, the famous port of Dabhol, built a few kilometres away from the sea was on the banks of the Vashisthi River. The smaller port of Rajapur was at the head of the tidal creek that was 20 kilometres away from the sea while Kharepatan, about 30 kilometres up the Sindhudurg River was the farthest from the sea.

protected by several metre-high walls fortified with 19 rounded bastions, with enormous cannons mounted on each. Cannonballs fired from those could blast battleships trying to come near the fort. It was the military base of the African Siddis, who were different from the local population and were shunned. They, in turn, lived at Janjira that had palatial buildings, soldiers' quarters and two sweet-water tanks. The town of Rajapuri and some nearby forts including Danda on mainland Konkan nearest to Janjira were in the hands of the Siddis. They collected revenue from these regions (present day Kolaba district) for survival. The fight between the Marathas and the Siddis of Janjira would go on for years. In fact, 'the recovery of Danda fort became an absorbing passion as well as a political necessity for Shivaji. To the end of his life and throughout the reign of his son Sambhaji, hostilities continued between the Marathas and the Siddis with great bitterness and fury' (Sardesai, 2002, pp.638).

It is a well established fact that for centuries shiploads of African slaves were brought to Asia, mainly from the region that is present day Tanzania. Mozambique, Goa and Diu were developed as slave ports. A large number of Africans had landed on India's west coast. Siddi was the term used to describe the people from certain parts of Africa, while some say that Siddi was an honorary title (like *Sahib* or Sir). For more than a century, Siddis of Janjira reported to the Adilshahi kings and were given the responsibility of looking after the coast. The Siddis also provided ships to the Adilshahi royals sailing to Mecca and were responsible for protecting them from Portuguese attacks at sea. Only Konkan natives knew the crimes committed by the Siddis of Janjira, who plundered villages, occasionally abducted women and children for human trafficking, and supplied ships to smaller merchants for slave trade.

Siddi was not a dynasty. When the head-Siddi who ruled Janjira died, the ablest warrior from the clan was selected to lead the men. Many natives including Marathas were employed by the Siddis, but most sailors and warriors were from the clan. Over the years, the

Siddis of Janjira acquired long stretches of coastal land and captured nearby hill-forts. They were also considered a strong naval power.

There is an interesting anecdote, elaborately written, about how the Siddis acquired the Janjira island by fraud and that it originally belonged to the natives from the Kolis – the fishermen community. The Siddis, who were merchants, had sailed from the port of Surat in a ship carrying fine wooden chests stuffed with wine and silk. They had anchored their ship near the island and asked the Kolis for permission to store their goods on the island. The Kolis agreed for some cash, and had a party to celebrate their business partnership. That night everyone enjoyed singing and dancing with wine and food. When the Kolis were drunk, the wooden chests of the Siddis stored on the island popped open, much like the Trojan horse. The hidden Siddi soldiers poured out and slaughtered every Koli man, woman and child and took over the island. Later they build the fort on the same (Sadia Ali, 1996, pp. 158).

If Shivaji wanted to control the Konkan, he had to either join hands with the Siddis or defeat them and take over Murud Janjira, or have a strong navy. The year was 1657, and when Aurangzeb was trying to get Bidar, Shivaji's 6,000 infantrymen led by Raghunath, had marched into the Konkan. It was a time when the monsoon had hit Konkan with a very heavy rainfall. Despite the rains, Raghunath had managed to capture some of the Siddi's terrain and forts, Tala and Ghosal from the region of Rajapuri. Forts of Tala and Ghosal, situated near the city of Roha, might have been built to keep a watch on the business and trade activities. Raghunath and his men tried to attack Janjira with the help of small boats but failed miserably. It is at this point in history that the Marathas rescued a young scribe named Balaji Avaji from the clutches of the Siddis, who later became the official scribe of Shivaji.

Among the Europeans who came to India as traders, the Portuguese were the first. Their colonies stretched from the Cape of Good Hope (present day South Africa) to Macau (China) and were a part of their

Empire *Estado Da India*. Goa was their Asian capital and the seat of the viceroy. It was renowned for its splendor, eventually coming to rival Lisbon itself. At the height of Portuguese power, it was called the 'Rome of the Orient'. It became the prototype of all other European settlements. Bassein in Konkan, also under the Portuguese was next to Goa in magnificence. Enclosed in kilometres-long walls fortified with ramparts and bastions, it was a planned township with well-designed avenues and smaller roads. The Portuguese had several naval fleet that they called Armadas and their warships were of different categories and size. The Armadas had more than a hundred small-sized galleots or small galleys with decks large enough to accommodate about 30 seamen and an equal number of soldiers. The small galleys could be sailed as well as propelled by oars, and were equipped with small cannons. The bigger ones, called the large galleys or galleons, of about 1,000 tonnes each were propelled only by sails. These massive ships carried 200 seamen and an equal number of soldiers, and had up to 60 cannon mounted on their decks. They considered themselves the lords-of-the-seas and developed a concept of monopoly on trade routes as well as certain items like spices, saltpetre and horses and no other ships were allowed to transport these items. They also forced their 'protection' on Asian ships and created a system of *cartaz-kafila-armada*, translated as 'passport-for-ships'. The Asian ships had to get passports (for a fee) and then Portuguese ships would escort them to and from their destinations for a hefty portion of the revenue earned by the Asian ships. They had captured several ports – from Diu and Daman in Gujarat, to Chaul, Bassein and Goa in Konkan. They repeatedly attacked other ports with the intention of destroying them – Dabhol being one such. They had ship-building workshops at Daman, Bassein and Goa and had employed a large number of engineers from Portugal. The Portuguese and the Siddis of Janjira lived symbiotically, and understandably so.

Initially, around the 15th century, after establishing considerable business, the Portuguese traders were followed by Jesuit Evangelists from Portugal who aggressively forced non-Christians to convert to

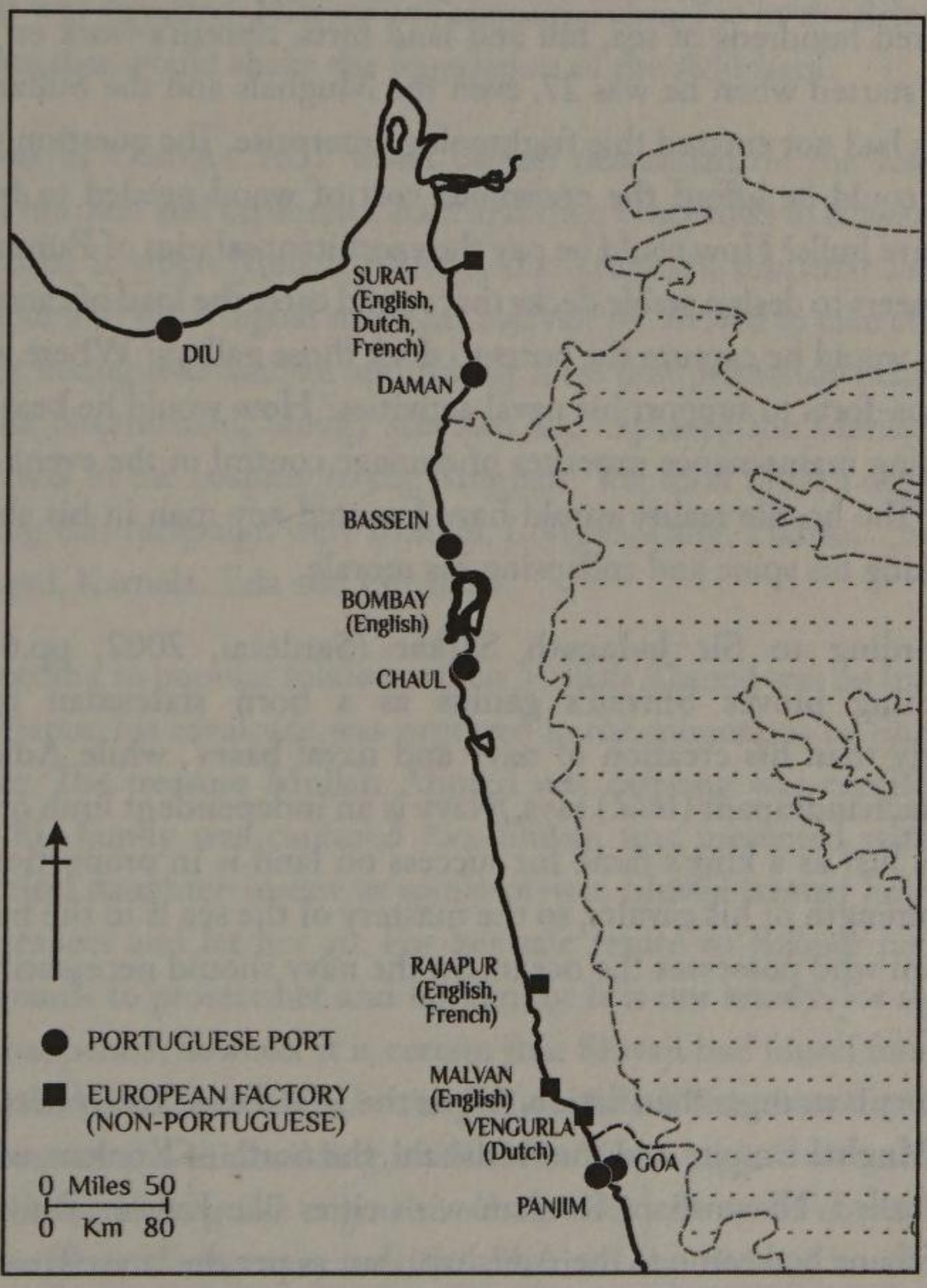
Christianity (mostly by force or lure), leading to horrifying persecution of poor Hindus and Muslims. Padres wielded significant power in the administration of Portuguese settlements. They received huge grants from their king and they owned large estates. To make them richer, the king of Portugal gave them monopoly rights to supply ammunition to their colonies in India. They were known as the Society-of-Jesuits and were brutal when it came to conversions. Non-Christians were forced to attend sermons in their churches and orphans were taken and converted. New converts were treated with special financial favours, and in turn those converts turned insanely orthodox Jesuits to show their loyalty – demolishing ancient Hindu temples and plundering their wealth to build churches. The Jesuits spread so much hatred that even the last rites of a Hindu or a Muslim were not allowed on their land and grieving families had to go to nearby Adilshahi territories to bid their final adieus to the departed souls. In the middle of the 16th century, a new law was set up, and those accused of disobeying Christianity were tried by the 'Inquisition' or an investigating committee. On the faintest suspicion of heresy, thousands were persecuted and killed during the two centuries of the Inquisition. If a small Hindu idol was kept at home or a non-Christian prayer whispered, anyone could be arrested and tortured in special Inquisition chambers.

'Those who could not be persuaded by sermons yielded to physical torture … Gradually the converts became completely alienated not only from the religion of their forefarthers, but also from their language, customs, attires, and even names. It was a cultural conquest' (Mehendale, 2011, pp.98)

The other foreign powers were the English, Dutch, French and Danish East-India companies. They had opened direct trade in India with their activities in places like Gujarat, Bengal, Malabar and Cholamandalam coastline. These places provided the Europeans with availability of merchandise, shipping facilities, communication with inland merchants as well as merchant ships at the ocean. In the Konkan, a small number of European warehouses were established

in places like Rajapur (English and French), Malwan (English), and Vengurla (Dutch). Mumbai too became an important port in later years by default, after the decline of Surat.

PORTUGUESE FORTS AND OTHER EUROPEAN FACTORIES ON THE GUJARAT AND KONKAN COASTS



Map 3. Portuguese Forts and European Factories along the Konkan and Gujarat coast

At this point, Shivaji must have contemplated: there was a chance to earn legitimate funds as well as help the Marathas of Konkan

to increase their wealth. In that case, why should he struggle and manage only with land revenue while the foreigners made huge money as export-import middlemen? Why must local merchants buy 'passport' papers from foreigners to sail their own seas?

It is hard to imagine how Shivaji built, acquired, repaired and restored hundreds of sea, hill and land forts. Shivaji's work on the navy started when he was 27, even the Mughals and the Sultanate rulers had not entered this frightening enterprise. The question was, how could he afford the enormous cost of wood needed to build massive hulls? How could he pay the exorbitant salaries of European engineers to design stable decks that would carry the load of cannon? How would he capture the ports to dock those galleys? Where were the sea-forts to support his naval activities? How would he bear the ongoing maintenance expenses of damage control in the event of a war? The hostile reality would have haunted any man in his shoes, breaking his spine and collapsing his morale.

According to Sir Jadunath Sarkar (Sardesai, 2002, pp.614), 'Nothing proves Shivaji's genius as a born statesman more clearly than his creation of navy and naval bases', while Amatya Ramachandrapant (*ibid.*) says, 'Navy is an independent limb of the state. Just as a king's fame for success on land is in proportion to the strength of his cavalry, so the mastery of the sea is in the hands of him who possesses the ocean. So the navy should necessarily be built.'

History is stranger than fiction. As per the 1636 Peace Treaty between the Mughal Empire and the Adilshahi, the north of Konkan, which was called 'Nizamshahi Konkan' with cities like Kalyan, Bhivandi and Thane had come to the Adilshahi, but as per the latest Treaty of 1657, it beloned to the Mughal Empire. Aurangzeb had warned Ali Adil Shah to recall his subhedar named Mullah Ahmed who was stationed at Kalyan. Kalyan was an important city in the 17th century and was on the trade routes. A cosmopolitan place, it had temples,

mosques, minarets, churches, agiyaris, palaces and it also had a land fort called Durgadi. The Adilshahi subhedar Mullah Ahmed was to leave Kalyan with his family and head for Bijapur, while a Mughal subhedar was to arrive and take charge of Kalyan. The stage was set for a major change. The change came but it was totally different from what was expected. History was about to submerge in the deluge of events that would shake the foundation of the Adilshahi.

It was in October 1657 when Shivaji descended on the Konkan with his men and captured Chaul and then proceeded to Kalyan. He captured it when Mullah Ahmed, the Adilshahi subhedar left for Bijapur and the Mughal subhedar had not yet arrived to take charge. After taking over Kalyan and nearby forts that previously belonged to the Nizamshahi, Shivaji attacked and captured the Mahuli fort that was in the custody of the Mughals. The forts Shivaji captured during this campaign were Mahuli, Lohgad, Tung, Tikona, Visapur, Songad, Karnala, Tala and Ghosala.

According to popular folklore, when Mullah Ahmed was on his way to Bijapur, his cavalcade was captured in the mountains by Shivaji's forces. The treasure Mullah Ahmed was carrying was confiscated and his family was captured too. Shivaji was presented with his beautiful daughter-in-law as spoils-of-war. Shivaji treated her with full respect and let her go. For her safe return to Bijapur he sent his guards to protect her and her family. It is not known for sure if this happened, however it is certain that Shivaji had found funds in Mullah Ahmed's treasury in the Kalyan fort. With those funds he would start the shipbuilding activities in Thane region with zest, by appointing Portuguese engineers whose salary he could now afford. Although, 'a strong navy was also required (by Shivaji) to protect merchant ships and ports in order to secure and enhance revenue incomes derived from maritime trade and customs duty at ports of call' (Mehendale, 2011, pp.190).

Shivaji now had more than a 100-kilometre-long coastline under his command, which included the forest area at the foothills of the Sahyadri covered with teak – the wood needed to build ships. He began the shipbuilding workshops in the region of Thane and Bhivandi, knowing well that they were located on a creek almost 100 kilometres from the open sea. It was difficult for him to take his ships to the ocean even via Ulhas River near Kalyan; the river split into two in the northwest corner of Salsette Island, (present-day Mumbai metropolitan). One distributory of Ulhas joined the Bassein creek and emptied into the Arabian Sea, while the other distributory emptied southwest into the Bombay harbour. Forts of Bassein as well as the Bombay harbour were in the hands of the Portuguese. Similar was the case with other smaller creeks leading to the sea. Shivaji knew that the Portuguese would never allow his ships to come out into the ocean – and he would have to eventually fight for his right. Another disadvantage was that he had to depend on Portuguese ship engineers, who could leave him at any moment. Shivaji had to take the chance – and he took it!

1658 arrived with a flurry of activity: Shivaji captured the Nizamshahi Konkan and the surrounding forts, which included Mahuli fort belonging to the Mughals and it was bad news for Aurangzeb as well as Ali Adil Shah. Both the parties were hurt, because that region had come to the Adilshahi as per the 1636 treaty. The same region was given to the Mughals as per the 1657 treaty and now a third party interest was created by an infidel called Shivaji. To add insult to injury, Shivaji had appointed a skilled Portuguese workforce that had already built 20 galiots as per his specifications. The ships were lightweight, not more than 150 tonnes, could anchor near every port – big or small, sail in every part of the ocean – deep or shallow – and could be propelled by sails as well as oars. Here, one must appreciate the foresight of an admiral like Shivaji who must have studied and discussed each part of the ship like the masts, oars, ribs, mallets, augurs and boat bases with scholars, fishermen

and sailors to get to the bottom of what would work best for him. For example, having fewer masts on a ship meant his infantry could defend the ship with swords if the enemy came on board. Too many masts would be a hindrance to the blows of swords.

Shivaji wanted his navy to be like his cavalry – lightweight and agile. His demand was for manoeuvrable vessels and speed was vital. Each had a deck or two that would be able to carry a principal battery of carriage-mounted guns as well as sailors and fighters. Later he would build larger ships for merchants but now, at this point in time, he needed battleships. 20 ships cost him 120,000 rupees, an amount equal to nearly 100 kilos of gold then. The Portuguese at Bassein knew that Shivaji would soon seek an exit for his armada to the open sea. They were a worried lot and had several grievances against him. In their letters written to their governors stationed at Goa they mentioned that with Shivaji appointing sailors on a regular salary, they would not find people to work for them and if Shivaji's navy grew, the entire coastal region would come under the Maratha threat! They insisted that it was absolutely vital that Shivaji's armada did not reach the ocean and the higher Portuguese officials must deny the Marathas the requisite papers (*cartazes*).

Shivaji would deal with the Portuguese all his life in his own way but the immediate problem was that he depended on the expertise of Portuguese ship engineers and workmen. Without them, his naval dream would never be achieved. However, there was hope because Goa was not governed properly at that point of time. Three years earlier, the governor of Goa had been expelled in an internal coup, and the usurper was arrested by another man who had claimed to be the successor of the expelled governor. The successor too had died mysteriously. The current governing council of three men was hopeless and anarchy had prevailed in Goa.

Salt harvesting was one of the main businesses in the Konkan. Thane, Kolaba and Ratnagiri districts had huge salt pans. The

peasants used to divide their time in harvesting the regular produce as well as salt. The Portuguese from Goa exported large amounts of high quality salt to Muscat, Iran, Eden, Mocha, and Basra. The Maratha territory in Konkan also had salt pans or salt flats but they could not compete in price or quality with the salt produced in Bardesh near Goa (under the Portuguese). To add to their troubles, the Siddis of Janjira frequently attacked the Maratha merchant ships carrying salt. Even merchants from far-off cities in Shivaji's territory visited Bardesh to procure salt to sell in their respective cities. Eventually, Shivaji created a 'Policy of Protection' for salt producers in his region by heavily taxing salt coming into his region that was not produced in his territory, especially the one from Bardesh, thus turning the tables on the Portuguese! He later created a fleet to transport salt from one port to another. (Kulkarni, 1997, pp.87-88). Inadverdently, Shivaji was also the first one who started the 'salt march'.

Finally Konkan would soon be ruled by a Maratha, a Marathi speaking ruler[22].

Shivaji and Aurangzeb

In the middle of 1658, the construction of Pratapgad hill-fort in the valley of Javali was complete. Shivaji's territory had increased – he had his father's *jagir*, the valley of Javali as well as the Nizamshahi Konkan. A little while later, Shivaji took control of other hill-forts

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22 Maharashtra, traditionally called '*dakshinapath*' or the avenue to south has been viewed as a geographic, cultural and linguistic link between the north and the south. Marathi has consistently maintained a very rich literary tradition from its earlier beginnings. It struggled to survive during the Mughal and the British rule respectively. A dictionary called *Rajyawyawahar Kos* was prepared under the rule of Shivaji, which marked the first attempt in the history of India to preserve the linguistic identity of a language (Cardona and Jain, 2003, p.700). Shivaji was of the opinion that if the common man did not understand the official language, there were chances of him getting misled or cheated.

like Lohagad (1,033 metres above sea level) and the adjacent Visapur hill-fort.

A small hill fort of Rohida too came to Shivaji after he eliminated an arrogant and tyrannical Deshmukh called Krishnaji Bandal. Later, Shivaji allowed Krishnaji's son to continue with the *watan*. Baji Prabhu Deshpande, an ace (*pata*) sword fighter, and *diwan* (administrative manager) of Bandals joined Shivaji soon after as a Maratha war general.

Following the takeover of the Javali valley, Moro Pingle and Shivaji visited a hill in the Konkan at the northwestern edge of Javali, which had a gigantic girth. It was the mountain of Rairi, where Chandrarao Morey was hiding and where he was later killed. The hill sat smug in the midst of other smaller hills that did not touch it, like a lion bounded by its pride. The mountaintop was flat, vast, and endless, a plateau nearly a kilometre above the sea and overlooking the coast, with abrupt slopes plunging into the Konkan. It was unlike anything Shivaji had seen before. And 15 years later, this would be Shivaji's capital, where his coronation would take place.

Coming back to Aurangzeb, he had already crossed the Narmada along with his army and was heading for Agra. His younger brother Murad Baksh had joined him with his army. Some more drama was about to unfold near the city of Ujjain, where Dara Shukoh had sent Maharaja Jaswant Singh Rathod to stop the Mughal princes' march to Agra, which came to be known as the Battle of Dharmatpur. Maharaja Jaswant Singh Rathore was a ruler of Marwar, which falls in the present-day Indian state of Rajasthan. He was to be a major player in Aurangzeb's war of succession as well as Shivaji's visit to Agra. Maharaja Jaswant Singh Rathod's appallingly tragic death and how Aurangzeb behaved thereafter is a shocking example of Aurangzeb's brutality and fanaticism.

The battle was fought on 15 April 1658. Jaswant Singh could have attacked Aurangzeb but he delayed, hoping to scare off Aurangzeb

with his imperial army and unwittingly allowed Murad's armies coming from Gujarat to join Aurangzeb. In any case, Emperor Shah Jahan had sent Jaswant Singh a message saying that he must not harm his sons: *Show off our imperial army of 30,000 cavalry and flutter thousands of imperial banners in the air; that is enough to scare away Aurangzeb and Murad.*

Perhaps the aging Emperor did not know his own son Aurangzeb. Having fought many battles in the Deccan, Aurangzeb's war-hardened cavalrymen were all the more aggressive and his gunners, trained by artillery expert Mir Jumla, were swift, their shots precise, not wasted, never going wayward, and never exploding midair. The shots were fired from an elevated position in the right directions, landing in the midst of Jaswant Singh's advance guard, causing acute infernos. Under the cover of this barrage, Aurangzeb's archers and musketeers moved ahead. We can only imagine how the skies must have turned dark with arrows flying northwards tearing through the chain armour of Jaswant Singh's horsemen. Singh's Rajputs showed exemplary courage by breaking away from their lines to attack the enemy but were slain. The Muslims in his army fled the battlefield, their horses stumbling and falling while crossing the water-filled ditch that was made to create a hurdle for Aurangzeb's army. Jaswant Singh had underestimated Aurangzeb's modern cavalry and lost the battle. He also never imagined that the combined armies of the princes would amount to such a massive mass. The Muslim mansabdars under him deserted him and joined Aurangzeb. Vanquished, Jaswant Singh was injured and lost 6,000 Rajputs in this battle.

Aurangzeb and Murad marched ahead, at Gwalior their maternal uncle Shaista Khan and many other mansabdars joined them. They crossed the Chambal River and soon marched towards Agra. The news must have sent shivers down Dara Shukoh's spine, who had hastily put together a mass army – 50,000 cavalrymen and

infantrymen – by recalling the Mughal reinforcements from distant lands and was waiting at Samugarh, south of Agra.

It was the summer of 1659. The sweltering sun, blazing sands and the blistering wind had made Aurangzeb and his troopers – who had by now travelled more than 1,000 kilometres (from Aurangabad to Agra) – sick with exhaustion and dehydration. 5,000 of them had died due to heatstroke. It was the right time for Dara to strike and slaughter the already exhausted troopers of Aurangzeb but he waited and no one knows why. The marshalling of ranks of his army was long over, battle formations had been done with and his army commanded by Muslim Khans and Rajput Rajas could have been set in motion with one bark of his order. Dara Shukoh waited for three long days to give orders while his men and war animals sweated profusely under their heavy metal armour. This delay allowed Aurangzeb's army to rest on the banks of Yamuna and regain their strength.

Aurangzeb's rested army and Dara Shukoh's tired army finally met on 29 May. Dara Shikoh's hesitancy was advantage Aurangzeb. Dara was not experienced in pitched battles; he had drawn up his artillery in a single line ahead of his vanguard of infantrymen.

Aurangzeb's vanguard was led by his son Mohammad Sultan and his 10,000 well-mounted horsemen. The middle body of Aurangzeb's army formation had 5,000 cavalrymen and in the middle of that was Aurangzeb, mounted on his armored war elephant. Dara might have been backed by numbers but his army was not at all a cohesive body. To face such a disorderly enemy, Aurangzeb had divided his artillery into two units – in front of his right and left wings. Dara's not-trained-for-real-battles soldiers were likely to attack impulsively, and would be intercepted by a two-pronged artillery attack, while Sultan could advance towards the core of the enemy's battle formation.

Aurangzeb had placed Murad Baksh and his army behind the left artillery unit.

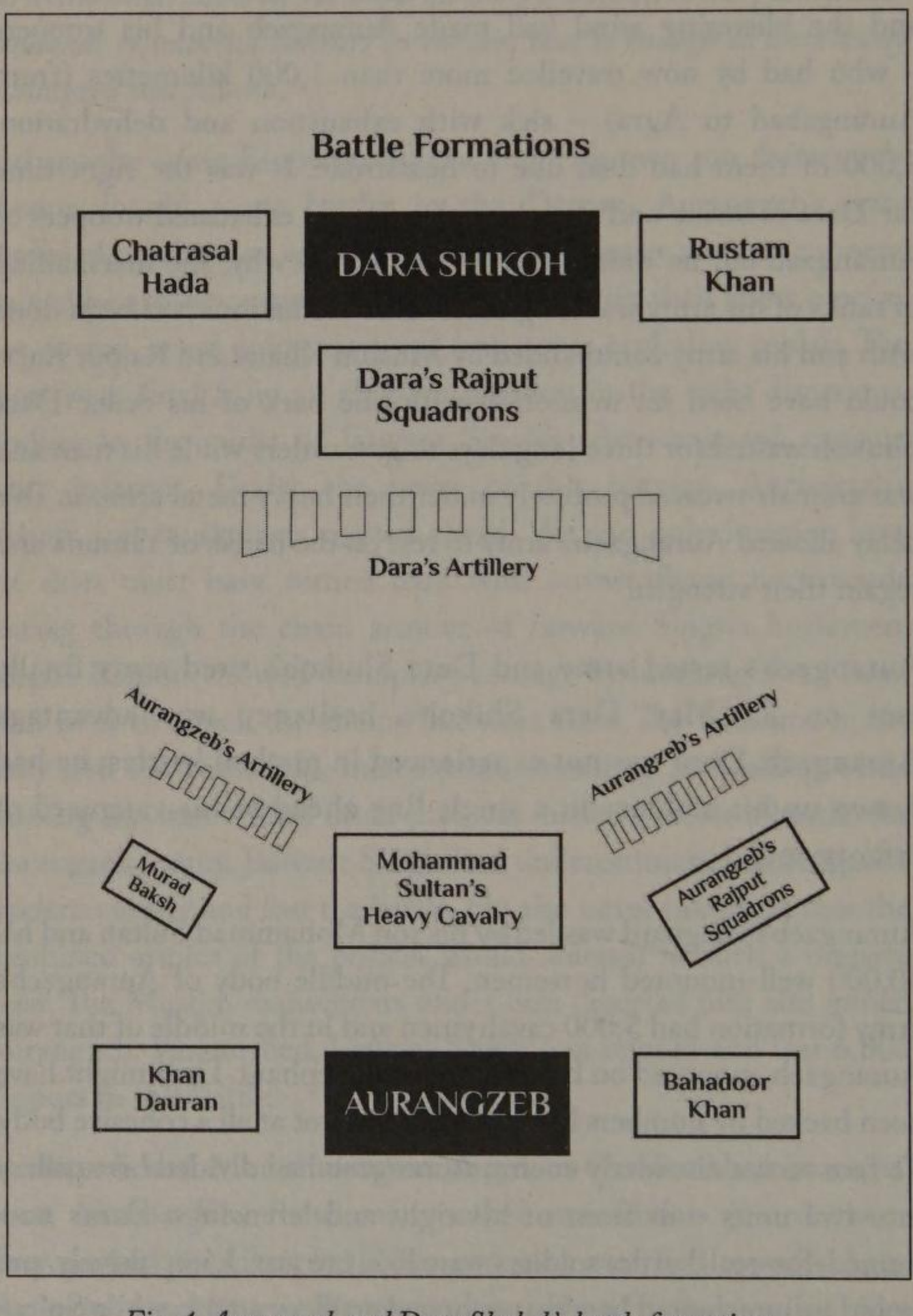

Fig. 4. Aurangzeb and Dara Shukoh's battle formations

It was only in the afternoon that the battle started with a bang. The entire southern horizon must have come alive with Aurangzeb's army. Banners fluttering wildly in the air. It is unbelievable that Dara ordered artillery fire a bit early. Mir Jumla, the Mir Atish (artillery chief) of Dara's secretly wanted to help Aurangzeb. He fired and emptied the stock of their explosives even though the enemy had not walked into firing range. The explosives hit the barren land between the armies.

Another mistake was Dara ordering his war band of pipes and drums to start war music to order an advance of his army. From Aurangzeb's side, Murad Baksh who was commanding Aurangzeb's army's left wing got excited by the music and advanced towards Dara's left wing without thinking. It was commanded by Khalilullah Khan, a mansabdar hailing from Uzbekistan. This Khalillulah was already bribed and was bought by Aurangzeb. But the Rajput infantrymen in Dara's vanguard attacked Murad with full force, surrounding Murad's elephant and showering the war animal with arrows and spears. Murad's elephant started looking like a porcupine and Murad was about to be killed. At this point, Aurangzeb rushed to rescue Murad, slaying and slaughtering Dara's Rajputs.

Dara's army's right wing was led by a brave Rajput named Chhatrasal Hada while the left wing was controlled by one more warrior (other than Khalilullah Khan) named Rustam Khan. Aurangzeb's artillery separated in two divisions had started firing at Dara's right and left wings killing Dara's men in large numbers. Dara Shukoh, who was not a good war general, made a fatal mistake: he left his position and went to help his left wing along with his special army (reserved for the Mughal princes) but to do so Dara and his army had to move in front of their artillery; thus Dara's artillerymen had to completely stop firing. Aurangzeb's army got some reprieve. As Dara and his men were on the move, they came within firing range of Aurangzeb's artillery and Dara's men started dying in the fire. We can just imagine the gory scene: Dara's elephant must have been moving towards his

left and Aurangzeb's right wing. He must have watched with dread at the battleground littered with bodies, broken blades, shields and hilts. Aurangzeb's horsemen must have by then broken his artillery barrier. His *mahout* must have moved the enormous war elephant through the hysterically fighting soldiers while his countless guards must have desperately fought around his elephant.

As the ear-splitting explosives rained on Dara and his men, a confused Dara turned back and headed to his right wing. Dara must have helplessly stared at burning shafts flying above him. Its tiny embers entering his *howdah*, like a shower of molten drops of burning candles. His skin must have burnt badly, breaking into red, huge blisters all over. Meanwhile during this mayhem, his Rajputs had reached Aurangzeb's elephant and they were trying to bring down the *howdah* and some were trying to cut the elephant's feet. Aurangzeb's special soldiers attacked the Rajputs and started slaying. When this was happening, Mohammad Sultan and his men marched into Dara's army and besieged his elephant. At this point, sensing death, Dara jumped down from his elephant and vanished. He first went to Agra fort and then fled to Delhi and was on the run for months (Godbole, 2010, pp.33-35, trans. Author).

Soon after this battle, Emperor Shah Jahan shut the gates of Agra fort. Aurangzeb cut the fort's water supply in the peak of summer and forced Shah Jahan to open the gates. Thereafter Aurangzeb put his father under house arrest. Later, Aurangzeb invited Murad Baksh to celebrate their victory, made him drink and imprisoned him in a drunken state. Murad was sent to the Gwalior fort as a royal prisoner.

Enter Afzal Khan

In the Deccan, the Adilshahi king Ali Adil Shah and his mother Badi Sahiba were smarting under the recent Mughal invasions.

They had lost their northeast stronghold Bidar and the nearby regions to Aurangzeb, and lost several hill-forts around Pune and also the Nizamshahi Konkan with all its forts and some of its ports to Shivaji. It was as if their destiny was ripping away parts of their kingdom.

At this point then, it was almost providential, pre-ordained even, that Aurangzeb had to leave the Deccan and give Ali Adil Shah and his mother some breathing time. Their first priority immediately was to eliminate Shivaji. Ali Adil Shah's father, the late Mohammad Adil Shah had sent Fath Khan and Muse Khan to get rid of Shivaji in 1649, but Fath Khan had returned defeated and Muse Khan was killed on the slopes of Purandar hill. This time they did not want to make mistakes – they could not afford to. They wanted the regions, including the Bhosale *jagir*, and the Nizamshahi Konkan with all the hill-forts in the region since they had had to hand over all this to Aurangzeb as per the 1657 treaty. Fulfilling promises made to Aurangzeb was vital because Aurangzeb had defeated Dara Shukoh, the crown prince of the Mughal Empire. Ali Adil Shah and his mother would send one of their ace warriors who had never failed in the battlefield. They would back him up with all the forces they had.

It was May 1659. They had chosen their man who would be their war general against Shivaji. He was 40-year-old Afzal Khan, the subhedar of Adilshahi's Wai province near the Javali valley.

Extremely tall, muscular and bull-necked, Afzal Khan wielded great influence in Ali Adil Shah's court. He had proved himself time and again in battlefields and had won battles-of-expansion by annexing southern Hindu kingdoms like Shrirangapattam, Kurnool, Bednur and Madurai. After the advent of Aurangzeb in the Deccan as a Mughal subhedar, Afzal Khan had faced the Mughal armies with courage, entrapping even Aurangzeb once in the battlefield. The king and his mother had believed Afzal Khan when he told them

that it was the Grand *Wazir* of their sultanate that had committed treachery by letting Aurangzeb free from his entrapment. It was on Afzal Khan's insistence that Khan Mohammad was assassinated in Bijapur.

Afzal Khan's seal had the following words: *Katile Kafiran, Sikandar Biniyade Butan* – the killer of infidels and the destroyer of deities. Sometimes, he even used the following verse in the letters he sent to Hindu watandars: '*If you seek higher heavens, then compare this Afzal with Afzal, the supreme, in the best of men, and when the beads of the rosary are counted, you will hear only one name – Afzal, Afzal, and only Afzal.*'

There is no authentic information available on the ancestry of Afzal Khan but he was not born into a wealthy, noble family (otherwise the history books would have said so and mentioned the family name). In fact, legend says that his mother, a Deccani (Dakani) Muslim, was one of the cooks who worked for the royal kitchen in Badi Sahiba's palace. Mohammad Adil Shah spotted him and urged his queen to remove him from the kitchen and put him up for military training. Some historians speculate that he was Mohammad Adil Shah's illegitimate son, begotten from the cook but it seems far-fetched. We can only imagine the rest – the school must have had boys from wealthy Persian and Turkish families teasing little Afzal, who was tall and big for his age, who spoke the Deccani language[23]. When other boys' fathers would come to see their sons' progress, he might have scrambled to show his skills in sword-fighting and archery. A tough and traumatic childhood would have sharpened his survival instincts and made him extremely competitive. He must have struggled to learn the elite languages of

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[23] 'Deccani was the vernacular language of the Deccan Muslims. It was a mix of Hindi peppered with words borrowed from Persian, Turkish, Marathi, Telugu, Kannada and Tamil' (Eaton, 2005, p.142).

the times in Adil Shah's court[24]. The result of his hard struggle was that he had grown up to be a strict disciplinarian, wrestler, warrior and a good administrator. One can only imagine the personality of Afzal Khan from a letter he once wrote to a watandar in Marathi. He writes, '*Take notice that we will dig you out of any place where you go, cut to pieces the one who gives you refuge along with his family and extrude them through an oil mill*' (Mehendale, 2011, p. 201).

However, there was another reason why Afzal Khan was chosen to eliminate Shivaji: Afzal Khan hated the Bhosale family.

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[24] Different functions of the court had different people responsible for it and those people used particular languages depending on the function. The official language across Sultanates was mostly Persian, however, the people of the region – also workers in the court – contributed to the proliferation of different languages in the Adilshahi court. For instance, Court Officials, part of the State Authority used Arabic and Persian. The Court Literati used Telugu, Dakani, and Persian in their literature. Revenue and law officials used Telugu, Marathi, Kannada, and Persian while poets and saints used Marathi and Dakani.

CHAPTER 6

Death of Afzal Khan and its Aftermath

There are various stories about how Afzal Khan was called to the court of Ali Adil Shah and how he reacted saying, 'who is this Shivaji? I will not even need to get down from my horse to arrest him!' Ali Adil Shah knew that Shivaji was dangerous and had hill-forts under his control. In case of a battle, Shivaji would resort to what he opted for in the last battle – take refuge in a hill-fort and kill everyone who approached the hill. Ten men from a fort garrison could kill hundreds by shooting the climbers with arrows through the slits (*jangi*) made on parapets of the ramparts. The hill garrisons of Shivaji were also equipped with naptha balls, large stones and (sometimes even smaller pebbles) that they would shoot with the help of catapults. Besieging and trapping Shivaji in a hill-fort was time consuming and expensive, if not impossible. To start with, it needed a large number of troopers, larger than Ali Adil Shah could gather at that point of time. The king was also not sure which hill-fort Shivaji would hide in, and if that fort was besiege-able. Even if they were to try and trap Shivaji – whom they now called a mountain-rat – Shivaji could escape from secret routes and leave the besiegement (literary and figuratively) sucking its thumb!

Colonel Palsokar (2004, pp.84) writes, 'to capture Shivaji alive or to present his head to prove that Afzal Khan had killed him was the task. The task did not involve use of force to such an extent to annihilate him (could be done by deceit) as it needed to reduce his forts. A certain resort to deceit, cunning, guile, duplicity, foul play and trickery to trap Shivaji was inherent in nature of the task itself'.

In any case, Afzal Khan took up the challenge and Ali Adil Shah backed him with 10,000 cavalrymen, a few hundred war elephants and a number of cannon. For Afzal Khan it was time to get even with all those other noblemen of Bijapur court who might have looked down upon him because of his low-birth. Late General Ranadaula Khan's second son, proud Turani noblemen Waheed Khan, Yakut Khan, and Ankush Khan, African warrior Siddi Hilal, Afghan warrior Hasan Khan Pathan, Maratha heavyweights Balaji Ghorpade, Mambaji Bhosale, Kalyanji Yadav and Rajaji Ghadge along with their contingents would now be taking his orders. All together, Afzal Khan had with him more than 20,000 troopers. Badi Sahiba had given him enough funds to bribe and buy off watandars from Shivaji's *jagir* and use their sentinels against Shivaji.

In the summer of 1659 Afzal Khan went to Sufi saint Hazrath Pir Amin Chisty's *dargah* a few kilometres northwest of Bijapur and met a blind *avliya* (Sufi saint). The *avliya* told him that in his vision he saw a headless Afzal Khan and advised him not to go on this campaign. Afzal Khan had promised his king and so he decided to carry on but before he left Bijapur he did something very brutal. He visited his palace at Afzalpur on the western side of the Torvi hills (north of Bijapur) and killed 76 of his young concubines one after another so that once he was gone no one would touch them. Gribble (1896, p.401) describes the backyard of Afzal Khan's summer palace near Bijapur near Torvi hills in

these words, 'On a broad platform stretching along one side of what was once a large masonry pond or well, but which is now silted and embowered in mango and tamarind trees, are rows of tombs, all very closely alike. Examination shows from the device carved on their tops that these are all women's tombs and that they are ranged in eleven rows of seven tombs each. All are of the same size and shape and the same distance apart.' One history book in Marathi indicates that he killed each of them during sexual orgies. One can see as many tombs of precisely the same pattern, seven in eleven rows in the backyard of the ruins of his palace. The tombstones rise over a raised platform and are called *Saat Kabar*. Maybe it was his way to let the world know about his absolute passion.

Sometime before the monsoon arrived, Afzal Khan left with his army in the direction of Shivaji's *jagir*. We can just imagine what an optical illusion his cavalcade of 10,000 horsemen, thousands of footmen, artillerymen, trailed by camels, war elephants, and cannons on wheels must have created. His bards did the rest. They roamed from village to village and sang hoarsely, exaggerating his and his army's strength. When some of the Deshmukhs from the Bhosale *jagir* had meekly come to him, Afzal Khan had accepted them graciously. The Adilshahi army moved towards Baramati, a town in Shivaji's *jagir* (100 kilometres southeast of Pune), through the terrain, camped near the famous temples, destroyed some of them, threatened the priests and forced them to part with wealth from their treasuries. Afzal Khan even captured Shivaji's wife's brother, the jagirdar of Phaltan and circumcised him (Samant, 2009, p.73).

Meanwhile, in the north, on 5 June 1659, Aurangzeb had taken over the reins of the Mughal Empire. His name and titles were publicly proclaimed through the religious sermon. The Muslim clergies did not mind reading the *kutbah* in his name even when the old dethroned emperor was still alive. Coins bearing his name were

thrown to the subjects. His titles were announced loudly in Persian[25]: *bahadur* (the brave), *alamgeer* (the conqueror of the world), *padishah* (the Emperor), *ghazi* (the holy warrior). The final announcement was made in verse:

The new minted coins, are stamped with his name.
They shine like the moon and he, Aurangzeb the Alamgeer
Will dazzle the world. Through day, night and noon.

Aurangzeb had kept his father, the dethroned emperor Shah Jahan under house arrest at Agra Fort and imprisoned his younger brother Murad Baksh after making him drink glass after glass of wine. Murad was then sent to Gwalior prison. He would not rest until he had captured and killed Dara Shukoh as well as Shah Shuja.

Emperor Aurangzeb who ruled the empire for 50 long years was to change the course of India's history!

The meeting – 10 November 1659

Shivaji, his Sarnaubat (Chief of Army) Netoji Palkar[26], and his advisor Moro Pingle had been on the move, visiting the hill-forts of Kondana, Purandhar, Torna, Lohagad and others. They briefed each of the fort commanders to keep their granaries stuffed with enough grain, salt, oil as well as medicine and made sure that they knew about the caliber, mobility and range of the cannons mounted on

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25 'Since the Ghazvavid occupation of Lahore, Persian, also called Farsi was the official language of the sultanates' (Farooqui, 2011, p.290). 'Persian was also an official language of the Mughal court. Aurangzeb usually spoke Persian but he was also fluent in Turkish and Arabic. Dominance of Persian is evident from the Mughal State papers such as *farmans* and *akhbars* (newsletters at the Mughal court). Besides, several Europeans who had travelled in the Mughal Empire have mentioned this fact' (Mehendale, 2011, p.740).

26 In 1659, Netoji was Sarnaubat or head of Shivaji's army. He was a famous cavalry leader and took part in most of the campaigns and battles until his desertion to Bijapur in 1666.

their ramparts. They personally inspected the garrisons, took stock of the storehouses and checked the quality of the gunpowder and cast iron projectiles.

Like many other Deshmukhs of Maval, Kanhoji Jedhe a powerful and influential watandar from Maval, received a *farman* from the Adilshahi king Ali Adil Shah, asking him to join Afzal Khan. Jedhe along with his five sons headed for Rajgad and met Shivaji. He showed the king's decree to Shivaji and after reading it Shivaji commented sardonically that just like Kedarji and Khandoji Khopade (other Deshmukhs of Maval), Jedhe must also join Afzal Khan. Shivaji warned that if Jedhe did not comply with the king's orders Jedhe's *watan* may be jeopardised. For that Jedhe replied, 'The solemn promise I had made to Maharaja (Shahaji), when he assigned me to your charge remains constant. I place my *watan* at your feet.' (Mehendale, 2011, p. 206).

Meanwhile, Afzal Khan and his army had covered a distance of 270 kilometres from Bijapur and reached Baramati. Along the way, Afzal Khan was making his own efforts to seduce the Deshmukhs with money and promises of military posts in the Adilshahi army. It was early July. After camping for a week in Baramati, Afzal Khan would have moved in the direction of Pune. If he had done so, his marauding army would destroy Shivaji's *jagir* – the core of his budding kingdom. The farmers, their families, and revenue collectors would have been slaughtered and their fields spoilt. Their morale, their livelihood, their families and their cattle would be trampled under the hooves of Bijapur's war animals. Shivaji wanted victory for his people but not at their cost.

Shivaji left Rajgad and reached Pratapgad hill-fort in the Javali valley on 11 July 1659. He would fight Afzal Khan from Pratapgad! It was to steer Afzal Khan's army away from his *jagir* (and thus sparing the peasants and other people of his *jagir*) and towards the impassable, perilous Javali. He also let it be known that he was to stay put at

Pratapgad, giving Afzal Khan no option but to take his army and move towards Wai, about 100 kilometres southeast of Baramati (in the direction opposite to Pune) and at the edge of Javali.

Wai town, on the banks of Krishna River, was 32 kilometres as the crow flies from Pratapgad. However, one had to negotiate 65 kilometres of treacherous mountain trails to travel from Wai to the fort. Wai and Javali are separated by the Mahabaleshwar plateau and the steep Sahyadri mountains with precipitous slopes. Thereafter, to reach the foothills of Pratapgad, one has to climb down the abrupt descent from the ghats of Radatondi (literally, cry-face). It was named so since this trail made even the men of the hill weep with dread.

Afzal Khan reached Wai in the month of July - during the peak of the monsoon season. Since he was the subhedar of Wai he had a house on the banks of the Krishna River. All he could do was wait for the rains to get over. During the rains, the valley of Javali had turned into a water trap as its rivers were flooded, mountain trails were blocked by landslides and slopes were covered by wild vegetation. Shivaji was in no hurry, but for Afzal Khan, a delay meant expenses. It had been three months or 90 days since he had left Bijapur. More than a million rupees had been spent in salaries of the troopers, food, medicines, fodder for the war animals and bribes given to watandars. Badi Sahiba was impatient and had started writing letters to Afzal Khan, pressing him to show results.

At Pratapgad, Shivaji appointed many weapon-smiths to make different types of weapons[27] needed to fight the Adilshahi army. The

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27 Different weapons were used by the Marathas like *Bhaala*, a spear, *Kurhaad*, a battle axe; *Gurz* is a mace-like iron club with spikes used to strike someone wearing a helmet and armour, *Madu* is a shield with a handle and two pointed antelope horns protruding from both sides. *Bichwa* is a doubly-curved, doubly-edged S-shaped bladed dagger with a looped hilt (it looks like the stinger of a scorpion). *Dhanushya Baan* means bow and arrow. *Waagh-nakha* is a ring-like weapon that fits around the knuckles. It remains concealed when the palm is closed but when the palm is opened it is revealed, baring the sharp-edged pointed claws made of steel that can tear apart human flesh.

blade makers and the *shikaldars* (blade sharpeners) were summoned. Shivaji was particular about the specifics like weight and dimension of the blade and the size of the sword hilts[28]. Cushioned linings and bigger knuckle guards were fixed on the hilts for a better grip. The ridges of the blade were made heavy by adding more metal to the blade near the hilt. This brought the centre of gravity of the sword near the hilt – or the hand of the soldier who holds the sword. The Marathas knew that by adding more carbon and chromium in the iron made the blades of the sword less bendable and yet more unbreakable when the blades hit bones.

While Shivaji was at Pratapgad, tragic news arrived from Rajgad Fort. His wife Sayee Bai, who was ailing with with chronic illness after the birth of Sambhaji had passed away, leaving their toddler son Sambhaji, and three daughters motherless. There was hardly any time to grieve, because immediately thereafter, as soon as the rains stopped,

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[28] Different types of swords were used as well. *Dhop* swords were more than 4-feet long. They were pointed to pierce, and were lengthy enough to cut a footman even from horseback. The lower edge of the blade was sharp all through its length, making the sword an extraordinary chopping machine. The upper edge, *pipala*, was the most lethal – jagged to tear the flesh with ease. If the enemy ducked and avoided the swordsman's forward blow, he got chopped by its backward blow. The bottom end of the hilt had tang rods (butt extension) tapering to make its lower end pointed enough to kill. If the enemy was too close to use the long blade, hilts could be held vertically above the enemy to hit the head to crack the skull or used horizontally as a dagger to tear through the enemy's viscera. *Pata* swords (or gauntlets) were more than 4 feet in length. A *Pata* sword's straight blade had ridges that taper to sharp, lethal edges on either side, thus, making it difficult to break or bend. Its metal arm-guard was long enough to protect the fighter's arm till the elbow. It allowed the sword to be a part of the fighter, an extension of his hand. Once fixed, the fighter could use the muscles of his arm in full force. And, unlike other swords, its handlebar was not in line with its blade, but perpendicular to it, making it a horizontally striking weapon. Sword fighters usually used a sword in one hand and a shield in another but many pata fighters liked to use another sword instead of a shield. Some even used axes. Baji Prabhu Deshpande, Tanaji Malusare, Murarbaji Deshpande and even Shivaji were ace *pata* sword fighters. (As told by Mr Girish Jadhav – a famous private collector of medieval weapons.)

an eager Afzal Khan sent his envoy, Krishnaji Bhaskar to Pratapgad with a letter to Shivaji (Mehendale, 2011, p.208-209) that said, '*Your frequent insolence these days is causing much anguish to the Adilshah. You have brought into your possession that territory replete with hill-forts which had been won by the Adilshah after the dissolution of the Nizamshahi, and which he had ceded to the Mughals with the desire to sue for peace … You invaded and captured by force the invincible and extensive kingdom of the Chandrarao. You conquered Kalyan and Bhiwandi and demolished the mosques there … You have grown incorrigible and are not afraid of lesser persons. Therefore, the triumphant Adilshah has sent me … Therefore, obey my orders, conclude a treaty and surrender all your forts and provinces to me.*'

Shivaji gave some costly presents to Krishnaji and sent his *vakeel*, Gopinath Bokil along with Krishnaji Bhaskar to Wai with a brief reply (*ibid.*): '*It is gracious of you who subdued in battle all the chieftains of Karnataka to show me at least this much compassion. You are incomparably powerful. Your existence has embellished this earth and you are not deceitful in the least. Come to Javali in order to drink in the scenic beauty of the woods. Your visit will dispel my fear and, moreover, it will add to my prestige. I feel that, but for one as valorous as you, neither the forces of the arrogant Mughals nor those of Adilshahi are worth anything. Proceed cautiously towards Javali. I will hand over Javali and the forts you have demanded to you.*'

After a lot of deliberation and discussion with Shivaji's *vakeel*, Afzal Khan realised that Shivaji would never come to Wai and if he had to meet him, Afzal Khan had to go to Javali because without meeting Shivaji, Afzal Khan wouldn't know what he had in mind! Bokil had made it very clear that 'young' Shivaji was too afraid of the great Khan to come to Wai and that was totally out-of-question. The frightened youngster (Shivaji) would consider it an honour if the mighty Adilshahi general visited humble Javali. Afzal Khan was sharp enough to understand that further delay might mean either Shivaji changing his mind and disappearing in the maze of these hills or Badi Sahiba calling him back and shelving the campaign. Afzal Khan's advisors tried to discourage him from taking such a

drastic decision saying that the wooded valley was unsuitable for deployment of cavalry, which was their main strength.

History books don't throw much light on what made Afzal Khan decide to go to the valley along with his army. Some books say that he made Bokil take an oath for his safety. In those days an oath of a Brahmin was akin to a line etched by a knife on a rock of black basalt. If they broke the oath, their next seven generations would burn in hell without any hope of *moksha*. Disregarding an oath was moral treason, and for a Brahmin it was akin to betraying God. If he did not keep his word taken in an oath, he would seal the fate of his soul, the soul would then embark on a sinful, endless voyage from earth to hell and from hell to earth. The other reason was Afzal Khan clearly underestimated the 'young and scared' lad called Shivaji.

As Sun Tzu says in *The Art of War*, 'If your enemy is secure at all points, be prepared for him. If he is in superior strength, evade him. If your opponent is temperamental, seek to irritate him. Pretend to be weak, that he may grow arrogant. If he is taking his ease, give him no rest. If his forces are united, separate them. If sovereign and subject are in accord, put division between them. Attack him where he is unprepared, appear where you are not expected.'

A Dutch letter says that Afzal Khan cut off the nose of a man who had advised him against entering Javali, another was placed upon a sharpened stake so that the victim's weight drove the stake into his entrails while the third, being the son of an erstwhile chief general of the Adilshahi, got off only with a reprimand.

Afzal Khan left some of his army including war elephants and heavy baggage at Wai and left for Javali by taking a safer route along the banks of the Krishna River through his own territory. The track was good and there were less chances of ambush but one had to take the perilous Radatondi descent; one small mistake – a slip of a foot, or the dislodging of a stone – was enough for men and animals to disappear into the abyss. Since the Adilshahi troopers were not

used to hilly regions, Afzal Khan lost some of his men and animals. Meanwhile, the Marathas in the valley prepared to welcome their special guests by uprooting trees and flattening the earth to pitch tents on the banks of the Koyana near the foothills of Pratapgad. Food, firewood, and water were organised. Hundreds of helpers had been called from nearby villages to serve the Adilshahi troopers. Butchers, barbers, merchants, jewellers and even blacksmiths had come from Pune to cater to the armies of Afzal Khan. However, most of these were spies working under Bahirji Naik!

The respective *vakeels* visited each other's camps for meetings while the Adilshahi's troopers enjoyed the hospitality of the Marathas – good food, and plenty of servants (the spies) to tend to their needs while their war-animals feasted on the lush foliage. Finally, a meeting place was fixed: the Marathas would erect a palatial *shamiana* (marquee) on a neutral glade on the southeast slopes of Pratapgad. It was neither inside the fort nor in Afzal Khan's camp. Southeast slopes were not visible from the camp, which was on the northern side. Both parties could bring ten personal guards with them and during the meeting, inside the *shamiana* – only the respective *vakeels* were allowed to be present.

The date was fixed – 10 November 1659. Shivaji planned his moves after consulting his army officers and ministers. He had decided that only a few hundred men would remain in the fort. More squadrons from Maval and some from Konkan would arrive just the night before. They would secretly enter the valley from the southern side. With two villages at the foothills, Pingle and his men would hide near the village of Kineshwar while Raghunath's infantry would hide in the woods near Son Par village. Palkar's cavalry would be deployed to block the routes leading to Wai.

There were only two ways to climb up to Pratapgad – through the two villages at the foothills mentioned earlier; the *shamiana* was at the southeast, not exactly at the foothills. Afzal Khan had to climb a part of this hill by first going through Son Par village to reach

the meeting place. The other way was cunningly blocked by the Marathas (the northeast, from Kumbroshi village) by felling trees. Son Par village was surrounded by natural knolls that ran along the slopes. Between the knolls, there were ravines like natural trenches. The Maratha infantrymen would hide in the ravines that surround the *shamiana,* waiting in ambush. The host (a scared Shivaji) and his mighty guest (an invincible Afzal Khan) were allowed to take ten armed bodyguards who would wait at an arrow's distance from

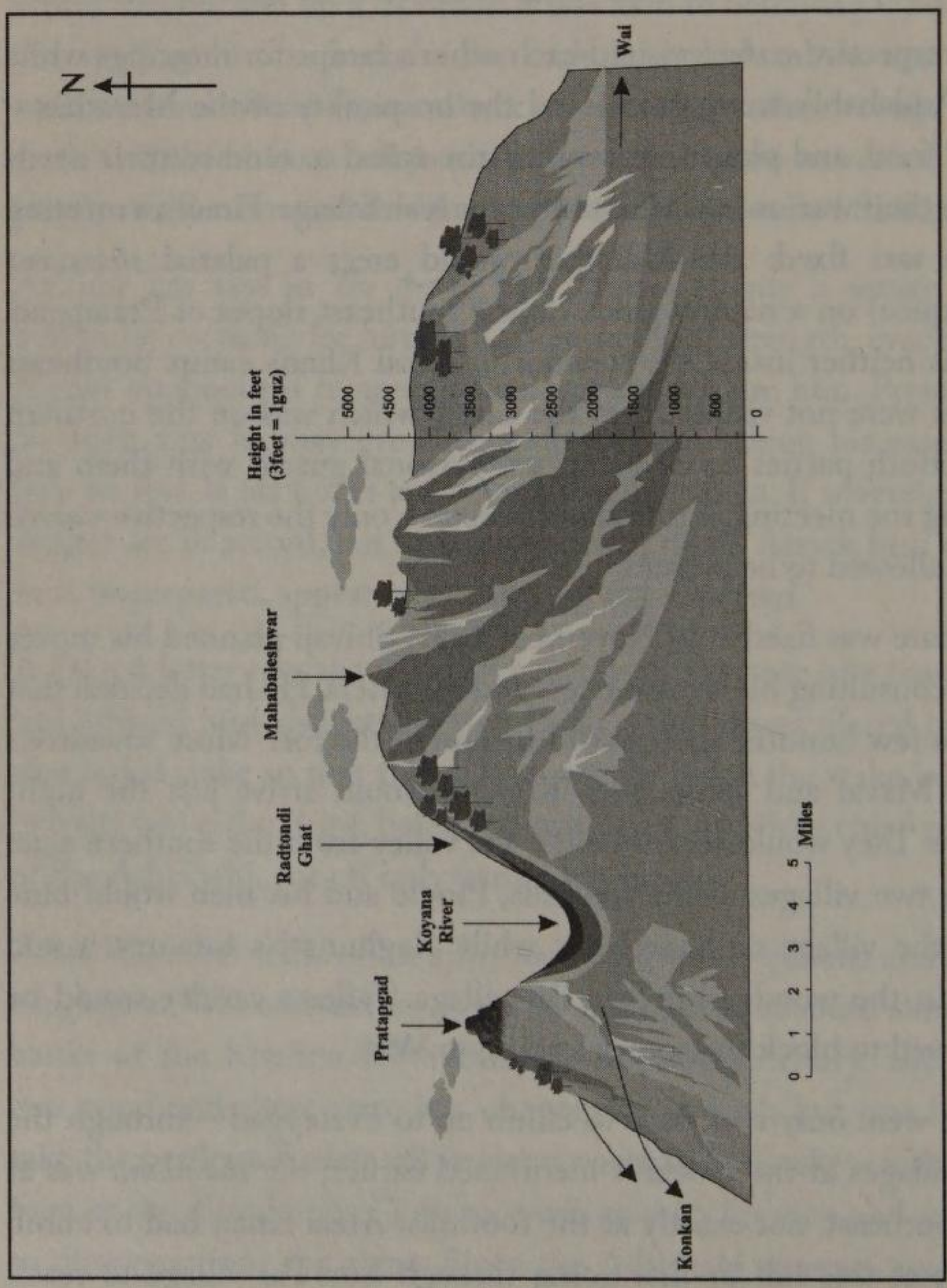

Fig. 5. Understanding Pratapgad's location and geographical importance

the *shamiana* – only two from each side would wait at the entrance. From Afzal Khan's side, it was Sayyed Banda and from Shivaji's side it was Jiva Mahalya – both renowned sword fighters. It had been decided in Shivaji's camp that whatever happened during the meeting, if either of them was killed, the trumpeters planted near the *shamiana* would blow their trumpets – the signal to attack and kill all ten guards accompanying Afzal Khan.

Every single general of Shivaji's knew that the meeting was in the afternoon; it was early winter and the sun would set early. That night, the moon was to rise late. For a couple of hours, the valley would be dark. Afzal Khan's troopers, who were new to the place, would be as good as blind. Advantage Marathas! Shivaji had also claimed that goddess Bhavani[29] had come in his dreams to bless him just the night before. Shivaji perhaps wanted to boost the morale of his people who must have been apprehensive after seeing Afzal Khan's kilometres-long camp spread across the banks of the Koyana River.

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29 According to Hindu Mythology, Goddess Bhavani was the power of all gods. She had killed the demon Mahisha, an *asura* with a human head and a buffalo's body, and had saved the world. Also called, Mahisha-surmardini, which literally means killer of demon Mahisha-sur. Mahisha-sur was not an ordinary demon, for he had a dream – a dream to rule the heavens. He needed to beckon Brahma, the creator of everything that was organic. He transformed all his energies and *no male, man or god in the world or the heavens could kill him*. Free from the fear of death, he gathered a massive army of demons and declared war against the king of the Gods, Indra and a fierce battle convulsed at the edge of the heavens, resulting in Mahisha coming out as the victor and the Gods, vanquished. The gods then sought the help of the trinity, Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, and the three channeled their ferocious energies. They let their energies flow in a trajectory that eventually transformed into rays of light, arousing mountainous flames. All the gods gathered around the inferno and started pouring their powers, all at once, to fuel the fire that had lit the sky. From this emerged a goddess with lotus-shaped eyes and eight arms. She was the original *Shakti*, the source of she-power, the *creator of Gods* as well as a *creation of Gods*. She was *Bhavani* (the energetic one), *Chandika* (the violent one), and *Durga* (the invinvible one). She was created to kill Mahisha-sur, who never thought that a goddess, a woman, would bring him his death.

On the day of the meeting, Afzal Khan tried to cheat by taking 1,000 armed men to the meeting place but was stopped by Bokil and they all had to wait near Son Par village. Only ten armed guards would be allowed. Finally, the meeting took place on time. We can only imagine what might have happened – Afzal Khan must have admired the beautiful *shamiana* with pearl-studded panels and decorated with silver and brass artefacts. Seeing Shivaji, a finely attired Afzal Khan with a *kimoush* (massive turban) studded with rubies and emeralds, must have got up to regard his host who barely reached his shoulders in height, and might have said, 'Don't be scared, my boy', to which Shivaji must have insisted that he felt humbled but not scared.

Shivaji must have looked dashing in his saffron turban laden with pearls, his neat sideburns, the large earrings of tear-shaped pearls and embroidered clothes. The fear, the guilt, the humility, the apology, the regret, and the remorse that Afzal Khan was waiting to see in Shivaji's eyes must have been conspicuous in its absence. Shiva Bhosale was 'not only quick in action but lively in carriage also, for with a clear and fair face, nature had given him the greatest perfections, specially the dark, big eyes that were so lively that they seemed to dart rays of fire. To these was added a quick, clear and acute intelligence' (Da Guarda, cited in Krishna, 1940, pp.1-3). It must have been a mighty psychological blow to Afzal Khan who was looking forward to meeting a coward, immature Shiva, eager to fall prostrate at his feet, begging and pleading.

Following the preliminary exchange of pleasantries, Afzal must have said patronisingly, 'In your youthful arrogance, you have shown disrespect to our King as well as the Emperor of Hindustan. I have come to reprimand you as a senior servant of Ali Adil Shah. And you have agreed to surrender your region. To that Shivaji must have concurred that he was eager to surrender all as agreed before. Shivaji might have then put forth the vital question, 'But does Afzal Khan have the king's *farman*? A fuming Afzal Khan must have regarded the all-confident Shivaji who was supposed to be a 'scared lad', and

he must have spread his enormous arms and started walking towards Shivaji.

The rest is history. The *vakeels* must have gaped as Afzal Khan embraced Shivaji with Shivaji's face buried in Afzal Khan's chest. They must have seen that Afzal Khan was tightening his grip on Shivaji by his left hand and raising a dagger with his right. But Shivaji, buried in Afzal Khan's grip, had tiger's claws fitted on his hand; he opened his palm wide and pushed the iron claws inside his enemy's waist with full force. All four steel edges, pointed and jagged, tearing through the layers of Afzal Khan's skin and muscles, just below the rib cage. With the blades still stuck in the flesh, Shivaji twisted his palm, moving the blades in a circular motion. Afzal Khan must have felt the excruciating pain and his hand holding the dagger must have shaken and missed its target. Shivaji was wearing a jacket made of steel mesh while an overconfident Afzal Khan was not and that made all the difference. Hearing Afzal Khan scream in pain, Sayyed Banda (also called Bada Sayyed) rushed in with his sword but was instantly killed by Jiva Mahalya.

The trumpeters blew their trumpets, the Marathas hiding around the *shamiana* sprung into action and killed Afzal Khan's remaining nine guards. Khan, his entrails hanging out, ran out and tried to push himself in his palanquin. Sambhaji Kavji, one of Shivaji's many guards leaped and cut off the legs of the palanquin bearers and also beheaded the already bleeding Afzal Khan. Kavji held Afzal Khan's head high as a trophy and danced. As planned, Shivaji hurried to the fort and ordered his artillerymen to fire the cannon.

The sound of the blast was the signal to attack the enemy camp. There was chaos in Afzal Khan's camp and the 1,000 armed troopers who were left behind at Son Par started climbing the hill to get to the *shamiana* but they were intercepted and killed by Shivaji's infantrymen hiding at the foothills. Afzal Khan's kilometres-long camp was attacked from all sides, and the Adilshahi troopers, who

were under the illusion that Shivaji was as good as captured, were relaxing. When they tried to run away from the camp Shivaji's cavalrymen hiding in the forest chased and slaughtered them. More than 3,000 men were killed; Afzal Khan's son Fazal was captured. The night must have arrived bringing a moonless darkness in the valley and whoever tried to run away from the camp – in the direction of two villages, or towards Wai were killed or injured. Many got lost in the forest. As planned, the news never reached Wai. The Marathas got the Adilshahi's horses, cannon, swords, spears and money left behind at the deserted camp as spoils-of-war. 1,700 Marathas perished and 400 were wounded that night. However, the last and a major phase of this battle was not yet over. Elimination of Afzal Khan was just the tip of the iceberg.

The Dutch called Shivaji a cunning fox, and the English depicted him as one of the most political princes of those eastern parts. Escaliot (the English Chaplain at Surat) describes him as distrustful, secret, subtle, cruel and perfidious, especially after the killing of Afzal Khan (*ibid.*, 1940, pp.30). The assassination of Afzal Khan has remained an issue even when it was proved beyond doubt that Afzal Khan wanted to kill Shivaji during the meeting, as he had done so before with another Hindu king. Sun Tzu has said, 'All warfare is based on deception. Security against defeat implies defensive tactics; ability to defeat the enemy means taking the offensive. Standing on the defensive indicates insufficient strength; attacking, a superabundance of strength.' Varsha Bhosle mentioned this quote in reference to Shivaji in an an article and goes on to say, 'Why should those who perceive Shivaji as a native ruler seeking *swaraj* get hives over the ethics in who drew first blood? In fact, if Afzal Khan had indeed gone in as innocent as a spring lamb, and Shivaji wouldn't have slaughtered him all the same – that would have made him one wimp king in my book. Take Prithviraj Chauhan and Mohammad Ghori: several times did Chauhan defeat the Afghan, and several times did he let Ghori live. But in 1192, when Chauhan finally lost, Ghori blinded

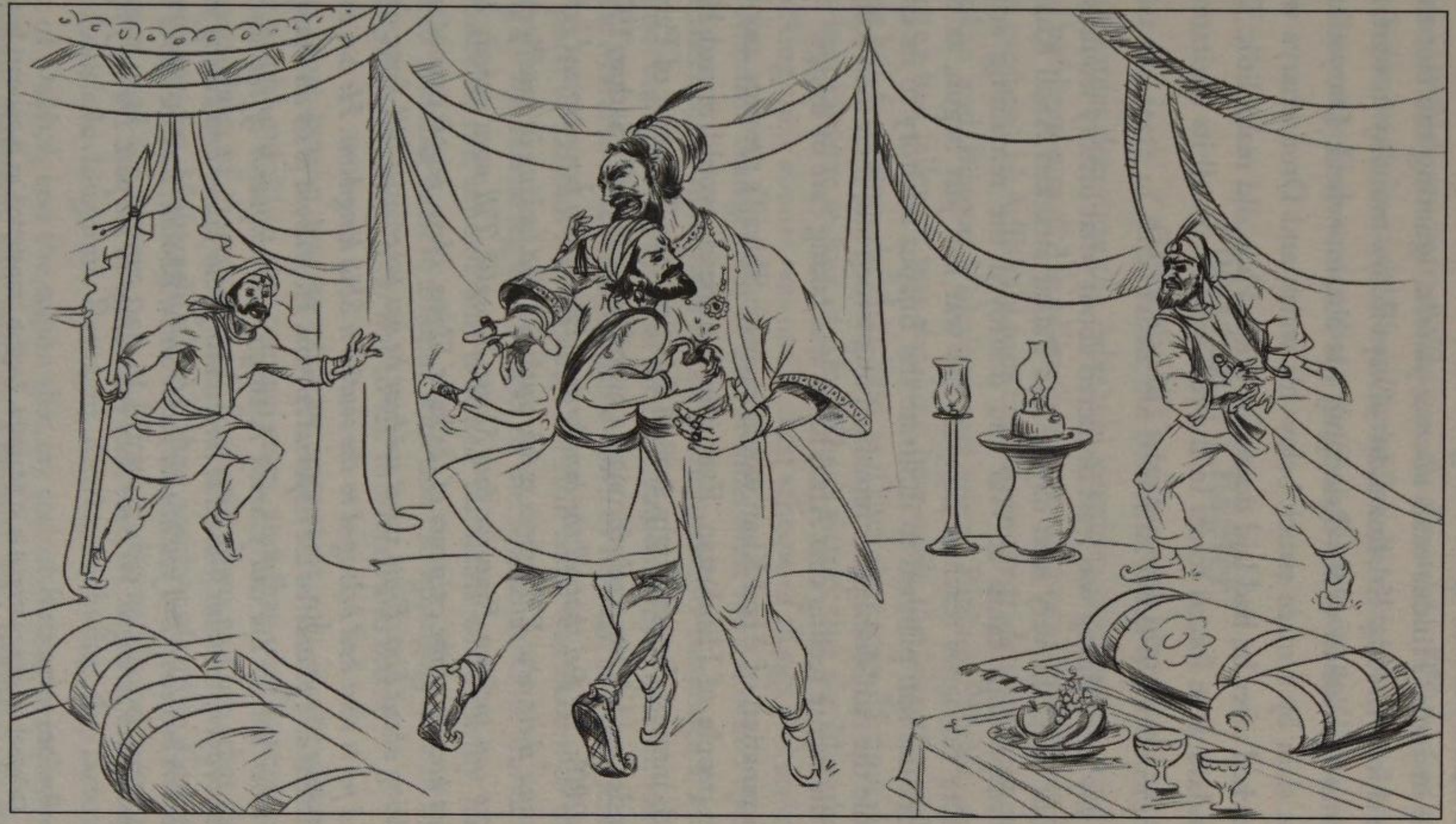

Fig. 6. The Afzal Khan incident at Pratapgad

and killed this last Hindu king of Delhi – and established Muslim rule in India. Hindus exalt *dharma-yuddha,* ignoring the fact that the side advised by Krishna didn't always follow morality in warfare: Karna was killed while dislodging his chariot-wheel; Duryodhan was slain by a mace struck below his waist; and Dronacharya was attacked after he had laid down his arms. Plain old realpolitik: The Pandavs were forced to act in the real world with all its limitation, for the ideal world does not exist' (Bhosle, 1997).

In any case, Shivaji was least bothered about what history would say about him. The very next day he and Palkar attacked Afzal Khan's (unsuspecting) camp at Wai and destroyed the remaining army before the news reached Bijapur. The war had just begun, as the Marathas had planned to infiltrate the Bijapur territory to its core while the Adilshahi posts remained unguarded and their men rested in the secure feeling that Afzal Khan was taking care of things.

Elimination of Afzal Khan would increase Shivaji's prestige among the people of Hindustan. Even the Europeans would regard him with interest. Interestingly, around this time, the Emperor of Persia condemned Aurangzeb through a humiliating letter[30] (Sarkar, 1978, pp.280): '*We feel that all the landlords of Hindustan have turned rebels because their new Emperor is weak, unskilled and lacking in intelligence. How can such an Emperor face Shiva Bhosale? Till now nobody had even known of the existence of the* kafir *Shiva. Now, people cannot stop talking about him. From what we hear he has taken over hill-forts, cities and ports that had belonged to the southern Shia kingdoms. He has even invaded and plundered the imperial terrain. He is about to set an example to other* kafirs. *You call yourself* Alamgir, *the conqueror of the world! Your bravery remains limited to imprisoning your father and killing your brothers by deceit. But you cannot tackle Shiva Bhosale, and we know it is beyond your strength. We have been your refuge in the past. Do not forget*

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[30] Original source material is in Marathi. English translation as it appears here is by the author.

that we have helped Humayun, your ancestor to get back the imperial throne of Hindustan. It seems like, you, the descendant of Humayun, too, are in dire need of our help. We will rescue you, by paying you a visit with our vast army. Only we can dowse the fires of kafir *rebels in Hindustan.'*

The Jauhar Chapter

After the death of Afzal Khan, the Marathas acted swiftly, pushing their armies deep into the Adilshahi kingdom, catching the king – who had been sure of Afzal Khan's victory – unawares. Within weeks they captured 14 Adilshahi forts that lay on the trade route between Konkan and Bijapur. Vishalgad was taken; Panhala, Khelna and Rangna had fallen. It was shocking how easily the Marathas took these hill-forts from the Adilshahi, as if they were toys. Most of the fort-keepers were so sure of Afzal Khan's victory that the Marathas attacking their abodes was not in their scheme of things and seeing the Maratha besiegement at the foothills must have shocked them and sheer dread must have forced them to simply surrender. If this was not enough of an insult to the Adilshahi's financial system, some of the Maratha squadrons had gone down to Konkan and plundered the ports of Dabhol and Rajapur. Ali Adil Shah was shaken to the roots by the blitzkrieg-like attacks of the Marathas. Over the next few weeks, the injured and defeated remnants of his army had started trickling back to Bijapur with news so appalling that all the Badi Sahiba wanted to do was to sail to Mecca and retire!

One more person was to play an important role in the drama that would unfold in the coming years, and that was Rustum-e-Zaman. Parts of the coast from Ratnagiri town to Goa (that fall in present-day Maharashtra) and then southwards from Goa to Karwar until the famous port of Mirjan in Karnataka belonged to the Adilshahi kingdom. Ratnagiri district, including the famous port of Dabhol, and the region that lay east of Ratnagiri including Kolhapur, Belgaum and parts of Dharwar also belonged to the

Adilshahi. All these areas and the Panhala fort that was regarded as a military stronghold of the kingdom were under the command of subhedar Rustum-e-Zaman, first son of the erstwhile chief general of the Adilshahi, Ranadullah Khan. Rustum's headquarters were in Miraj just 35 kilometres away from Kolhapur (both in present-day Maharashtra). The Adilshahi king naturally called Rustum-e-Zaman to deal with Shivaji.

Rustum left Bijapur with a 10,000 cavalry while Shivaji and his Sarnaubat Palkar did something totally unexpected. They did not wait for Rustum to attack them – they confronted him near Kolhapur, defeating his army and drove him away. Rustum did not expect such a sudden encounter. He was not prepared and had to hastily gather his wits and go for conventional battle formations that were easily broken by the Marathas high on recent military successes. Shivaji captured 12 elephants and 2,000 horses from Rustum's fleeing army as spoils of war!

This was Shivaji's first face-to-face encounter with the Adilshahi army on the plains, and he had emerged as a victor! It was 28 December 1659, 49 days after Afzal Khan had been eliminated. By now Ali Adil Shah was terribly scared and suspected that Rustum had secretly joined hands with Shiva Bhosale. Within a week, another blow was delivered to Ali Adil Shah. Palkar started raiding as many Adilshahi posts as possible, like Miraj, Hukeri and Hebbal and some more.

During this time, the Marathas had entered the Konkan. Dabhol was taken over by Shivaji's forces and its defeated subhedar had run away to Rajapur. Afzal Khan's son Fazal Khan's contingents, which were trying to counter the Marathas, suffered heavy losses. The Marathas continued invading from Rajapur to Bassein. The Marathas, led by one Doroji attacked Rajapur and plundered three of Afzal Khan's ships parked in the open sea near Rajapur and became the centre of attraction.

After Afzal Khan's death, the Marathas wanted to claim the Adilshahi ships (brought by Afzal Khan before the battle) as spoils-of-war while the Adilshahi king wanted them back. Meanwhile, the Indian broker for the English East India Company (EIC) had lent money to Rustum-e-Zama, and taken a bill for it under EIC's name as creditor. Queen Elizabeth I had granted monopoly rights to EIC to bring goods from India. Oliver Cromwell, the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Ireland and Scotland had given them monopoly rights on all trade in the East Indies. They had their warehouses in Rajapur and a few more places in the Konkan trading in spices, saltpetre, betel nuts, cloth and many more things. Chief officer Henry Revington had an idea: *why not claim the ships as payback?* The cost of the ships was a lot more than what the broker had paid Rustum. Richard Tailor, Rudolf Tailor and Philip Giffard were the gunners in Henry's artillery. When Philip Giffard went to negotiate the deal with the king's officials, the Marathas attacked and took Philip as hostage. To release him, Henry wrote to Shivaji (Anon., 1931, pp.358-359): '*We promise friendship with you. We believe that releasing Philip Giffard will reduce fear among the merchants of the Konkan ports under your command… How much friendship the English hath promised to act for you against Danda Rajapore Castle your servants Dirogy (Daroji) etc. we believe hath informed you; but how much injury we have received from them we are ashamed to tell you. Only thus much bee pleased to understand: that because we would not take the jounkes (ships) lying in Rajapore River, and bee enemies to those who were our friends, therefore hath our broker and one Englishman bin oarryed away by your servants and kept and abused in prison for 25 days; and although now our broker is released, yet still the English man is detained and imprisoned in Carrapatann (Kharepatan) Castle, to the sorrow of us and fear of all merchants in the port towns under your command, believing that this action will hinder there and our trading. But we are patient and hope for satisfaction by a letter from you. Therefore we pray that this may come to your hands, and entreat your answer to this for the restoring of our English man and what else hath bin taken, against your command.*'

Shivaji agreed and ordered Daroji that whatever was plundered must be restored. The Englishman who was taken as captive was released. Thereafter, the Marathas attacked Vengurla.

Ali Adil Shah had had enough and he wanted to go all out to eliminate Shivaji. And as Mehendale (2011, p.225) writes, 'considering their (Adilshahi royals and noblemen) abject lethargy and internecine squabbles, it was remarkable that they organised a new army in three months (after Afzal Khan's demise) and put it under the command of Siddi Jauhar, an Abyssinian Muslim who held a *jagir* at Kurnool (in present-day Andhra Pradesh), about 260 kilometres east-southeast of Bijapur.'

So who was this Jauhar?

Siddi Jauhar, a stubborn warlord, was the jagirdar of Kurnool that lay more than 300 kilometres southeast of Bijapur. Jauhar had killed the original jagirdar's son from Kurnool and taken over the region by force and had long since stopped paying revenue to his king, Adil Shah. Moreover, Jauhar had refused to recognise Ali Adil Shah as the king of Bijapur since Ali was not the biological son of Mohammad Adil Shah and Badi Sahiba.

Ali Adil Shah had emptied his treasury and backed up this warlord with 20,000 cavalry and 15,000 infantry[31]. Ali also had no choice – Mustafa Khan was long dead, and Ali had assassinated Khan Mohammad. The present Grand *Wazir* tilted 'Khawas Khan' (not to be mistaken with the earlier Khawas Khan who was already dead. This one was the son of Khan Mohammad) was not up to the mark. Afzal Khan was murdered and Rustum was already defeated. So it had to be Jauhar, who was given the title of 'Salabat Khan' (the invincible one) and was awarded with costly presents. Many noblemen would go along – Jauhar's son-in-law Siddi Masud, Afzal Khan's eldest son Fazal Khan (who was captured and then let go

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31 Some history books mention a much larger figure

by Shivaji), commander of Adilshahi's generals Bade Khan, and the Bhosale hater Baji Ghorpade and their contingents to name a few.

Jauhar left Bijapur with his huge army some time at the end of February 1660. The Marathas got the news and Shivaji, along with 8,000 infantrymen and some cavalrymen came to Panhala fort and stayed put. Shortly thereafter Jauhar lay a tight siege around Panhala, trapping Shivaji.

Another bigger peril was approaching from the north. The new Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb had ordered the newly appointed Mughal subhedar of the Deccan, Shaista Khan, to join all the garrisons scattered in the Deccan and attack Shiva Bhosale's *jagir*. The army commanded by the Mughal general Shaista Khan had a cavalry of 77,000, the finest Mughal infantry and several armoured war-elephants. 68 high-ranking mansabdars reported to Shaista Khan in this campaign against Shivaji. 29 among them were Muslim mansabdars and 39 were Hindus. His army was a melting pot of Turks, Uzbeks, Abyssinians, Pathans, Persians, Rajputs, Marathas and others.

Shaista Khan was Emperor Shah Jahan's wife's brother. His father was Asaf Khan[32], the Grand *Wazir* of Emperor Jahangir. Shaista Khan, born on 22 November 1605 and was 55-years-old in 1660. His real name was Abu Talib and he was a staunch Shia Muslim. Emperor Jahangir had bestowed upon him the title of Shaista Khan – the prim & proper one – and had promoted him to a high military and personal honour of 6000 *dhat*/6000 *sawar*/5000 *du aspa sih aspa*. Emperor Shah Jahan then gave him the title of Khan Jahan (Khan of the world). Shaista Khan had stood by Aurangzeb during the war-of-succession and was awarded with the title Amir-ul Umara (chief among the peers) and Aurangzeb, after becoming the Emperor, promoted him to the rank of 7000*dhat*/7000*sawar*/7000 *du aspa sih aspa*. Aurangzeb also rewarded him with a very high honour of being

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32 Asaf Khan was also Nur Jahan's brother.

allowed to beat his drums in his (Aurangzeb's) presence (palace musicians beating drums as Shaista Khan arrives), an honour rarely bestowed on anyone.

Shaista Khan's aim as per Emperor Aurangzeb's orders was to *Lay bare Shiva Bhosale's villages, burn every house down to ashes, siege his forts and take his family as captives.* After leaving the Mughal capital of the Deccan Aurangabad, Shaista Khan first camped at Ahmednagar and then headed for the Bhosale *jagir* on 25 February 1660, his final destination – Pune! The easiest way to reach Pune was via Chakan, but Shaista Khan had other plans.

Would Shaista Khan succeed? Only time would tell.

Some history books indicate that it was a well-planned offensive where Aurangzeb had joined hands with the Adilshahi king. Pune was the heart of Shiva's *jagir*, to its north was Chakan; to its west was the hilly Maval, to its southeast, the Supe and Indapur regions. The main hill-forts of Rajgad, Torna, Kondana and Purandar were around Pune. Shaista Khan did not approach Pune via Chakan but took a circuitous route as if to destroy every corner of the Bhosale *jagir*. After crossing the Bhima River, once they entered the Bhosale territory, he steered his military cavalcade towards Baramati town between the Indapur and Supe regions, systematically capturing the strongholds of the core of the Maratha state and slaying some known revenue collectors. His ruthless army advanced, looting, burning, killing and capturing. Once that was done he headed for Shirval, west of Baramati and then north, taking the path between the hill-forts of Rajgad and Purandar that led him to Pune.

Shaista Khan was experienced in matters of war. While his cavalcade moved on he left behind detachments at various places to keep his line of communication intact with his supply base – Ahmednagar. All Maratha squadrons under Palkar and Pingle could do was to hover around the cavalcade moving like a python through their country and try to cut off supply lines – without much success.

Finally, in the first week of May 1660, Shaista Khan's massive military procession settled down at Pune. Khan, his innumerable wives, children, slaves and servants occupied Lal Mahal – Shivaji's home where Shivaji had spent his childhood.

After settling down in Pune and renovating Shivaji's modest Lal Mahal to match Shaista Khan's royal 'aesthetic taste', the new Mughal general thought of another worthy plan to weaken the Marathas by taking the following into consideration. More than 100,000 people and an equal number of animals in the Pune camp in the nearby area would soon empty the region of grain and fodder. Once the rains commenced, nearby rivers of Mula, Mutha and Indrayani would be flooded and the lines of communication (supply lines vital for the Mughal army's survival) between Ahmednagar and Pune would be blocked. If he were to shift his military base from Pune to Chakan, which lay between Pune and Ahmednagar, this problem would be solved because the rivers between Ahmednagar and Chakan were shallow and did not affect the supply lines from Ahmednagar. While camping at Chakan, which was the Maratha's northern stronghold, Shaista Khan could capture the land-fort Sangramdurg ('warrior-fort'), thus axing the Maratha defences on the southern borders of the Mughal Empire. The conquest of Chakan would add a new dimension to his curriculum vitae. Also, the possession of Chakan would, in the future, greatly reduce the path of supply lines between Ahmednagar and Pune, where Shaista Khan was planning to stay for a long time.

The third party that went against Shivaji when he was down and out, trapped at Panhala, was the Maratha chieftain of south Konkan (Kudal) who had previously joined hands with him to fight the Adilshahi's forces. It is possible 'that the change in Lakham Sawant's policy was caused by what he perceived as the impending doom of Shivaji' (Mehendale, 2011, pp.228).

The forth party that would join the bandwagon against Shivaji were the British of Rajapur (Konkan).

Entrapment

Shivaji had brought his men to Panhala[33] for two reasons: if he had gone to Rajgad, Siddi Jauhar and his army would have come chasing after him; it would have been disastrous, what with Jauhar arriving at the foothills of Rajgad with his army and Shaista Khan with his. Shivaji's decision to take refuge at Panhala was also based on the assumption that Jauhar's besiegement would last only until the monsoon arrived. If it continued through the monsoon and beyond, and if they could not bring the supplies in, he and his 8,000 men would face certain death by starvation because the grain in the granaries of Panhala would last only for a few months.

Baji Prabhu Deshpande, the *diwan* of Hirdas Maval and his 600 men from Bandal were also at Panhala with Shivaji. Panhala was one of the largest forts in the Deccan, with a perimeter of 14 kilometres with more than 100 lookout posts. 845 metres above the sea level, it was built on the Sahyadri Mountains, and rose more than 400 metres above its surrounding valley.

Jauhar launched several attacks on Panhala but they were thwarted by Shivaji's archers and artillerymen who had launched counterattacks on Jauhar troopers daring to come near the foothills. Palkar and his contingent that was outside had come close to Panhala and were

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[33] Panhala was regarded invincible. It had a fortified outer wall that ran about 7-8 kilometres along the cliffs. The walls were protected for long sections by steep escarpments, reinforced by a parapet with slit holes. On its eastern side there was a three-storey structure made of solid stone called the Sajja *kothi* and is the erstwhile pleasure pavilion set into the ramparts. The eastern chamber of the kothi was large with flattish domes as its ceiling and arcaded balconies that hung over the ramparts. The large windows of the *kothi* overlook the shallow hill of Pavangad which is separated from Panhala only by a ravine. The slopes of Panhala were cut by natural trenches made by ravines and brooks and the glades are covered with thick vegetation broken by massive boulders. Teen Darwaja – the triple gate, main entry/exit point was an elaborate example of military architecture of the Bijapur style. There were large granaries (Ambarkhana), lakes, barracks, and temples there as well.

struggling to break through the besieging army at night. A number of times, the Maratha infantrymen under the cover of ravines tried to spring on Jauhar's besiegers but it proved impossible to break Jauhar's ring. Meanwhile, Jauhar called for the English long-range cannon and explosives from Henry Revington of Rajapur. Henry had forgotten that Shivaji had spared his men and his warehouse at Rajapur just a few years ago. He thought Panhala was going to be Shivaji's graveyard. If his explosives were used by Adilshahi once, he was sure that they would purchase them for all the battles and perhaps even the Mughal too would consider his product, bringing huge dividends to the company and a name for him. Jauhar launched a massive attack with the help of the English cannon and explosives to break the Panhala fort wall but it was so strong that not even a chip could be dislodged!

On the Adilshahi front, Palkar raided several posts in and around Bijapur hoping that Jauhar would leave the siege and chase him but that did not happen. Palkar even attacked Shahapur[34], giving sleepless nights to Ali Adil Shah but Jauhar did not budge. Instead, Jauhar was getting the besiegement ready for the monsoons. Cartloads of straw and palm leaves had arrived for roofing. He also replaced the tents with clay houses that had roofs of straw. Countless drains were dug to flush the rainwater away while the food at Panhala was running out.

July had arrived and it rained heavily all over the country. Shivaji had to get out before starvation killed them all; he also had to save his budding state from the brutal designs of Shaista Khan. Shivaji had a plan and he discussed it with Baji Prabhu Deshpande. They sent a *vakeel* named Gangadhar to the foothills of Panhala

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[34] Shahapur seems to have been the centre of business of the Adilshahi. The population is stated at one time to have amounted to nearly a million, and judging by the wide area the streets and houses covered this is not improbable. For three miles from the walls of Bijapur the country is covered with the ruins of Shahapur, and the city apparently spread still further (Gribble, 1896, p.402).

(with a white flag perhaps) who then visited Jauhar with a letter. In the letter, Shivaji expressed regret for causing trouble to the Adilshahi and promised to give back all the forts he had taken in the recent past including Panhala. In the letter, Shivaji mentioned that he did not want his people to die of starvation on Panhala and hence he would surrender in person to Jauhar the next day – on 13 July. Jauhar found no reason to say 'no'; he agreed. The news of Shivaji's long-awaited surrender spread like wildfire. People started celebrating in Jauhar's besiegement. What was hiding in the darkness of the night between 12 July and 13 July? No one knew.

It was raining heavily. Before midnight, Shivaji along with Baji Prabhu and his 600 men from Bandal Maval left Panhala from Rajdindi gate and climbed down the steep descent – Shivaji was in the palanquin and the others were on foot, including Baji Prabhu. There was one more palanquin in the crowd but no one knew who was riding in it. Trimbak Bhaskar (son of Sonoji Dabir was made the fort-keeper of Panhala) was now responsible for thousands of Maratha infantrymen trapped inside the fort.

Some of Jauhar's scouts spotted a palanquin heading westward. It was followed by just a few men. Jauhar sent his son-in-law Masud to check. Masud and his squadron galloped in the direction where the palanquin was spotted and soon found it. In the light of a flickering torch, in the dark of that stormy night, what Masud saw in that palanquin stopped his heart. He had heard of how Shivaji looked; the man in the palanquin was indeed Shiva Bhosale. The palanquin was brought to Jauhar, who immediately knew that the man was Shivaji's double, and was slayed immediately. It is believed that the man in the palanquin was in fact Shivaji's barber, Shiva Kashid. He knew he would be faced with certain death, and that is how he attained martyrdom.

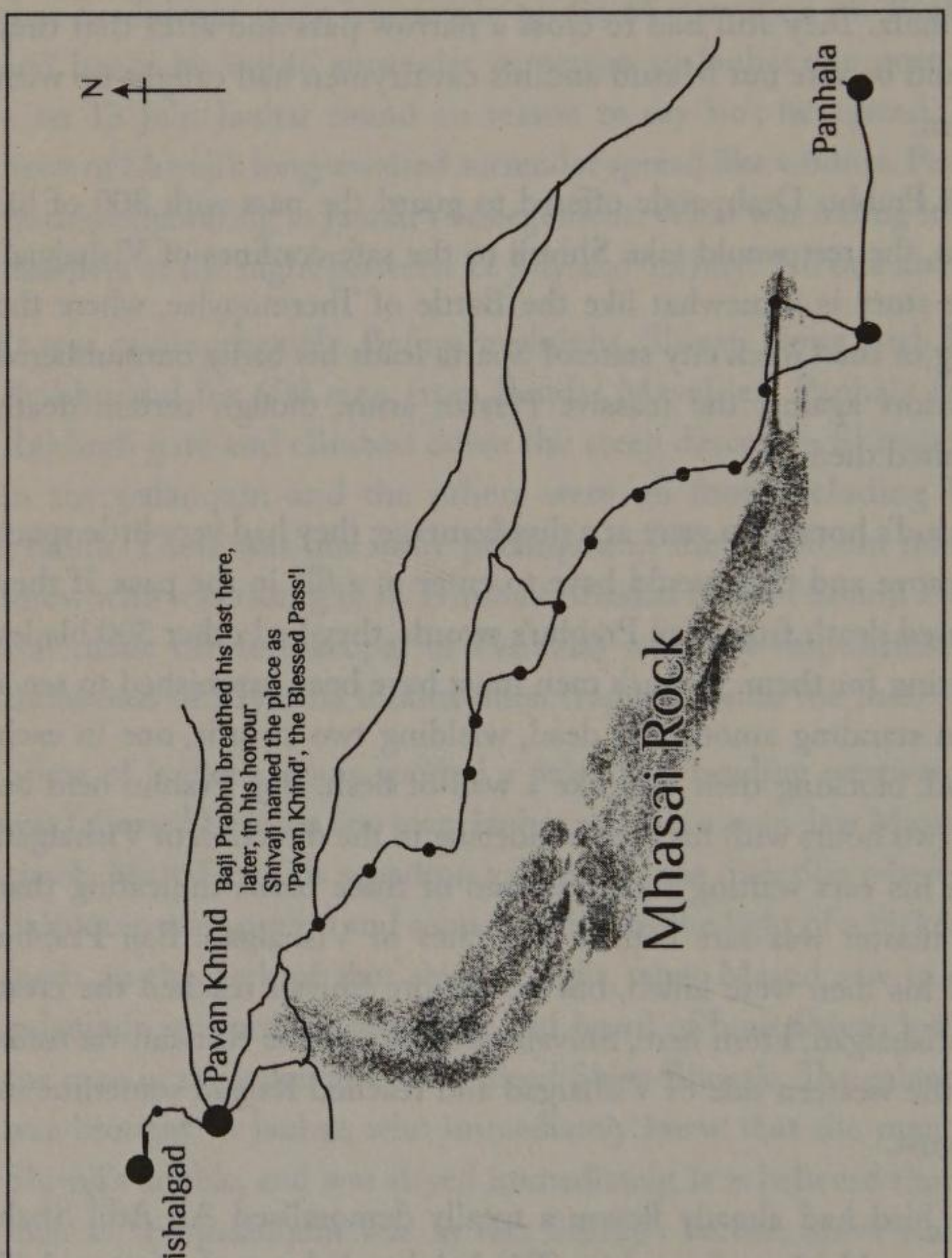
Jauhar knew at once that he had been fooled, and he guessed that the 'real' Shivaji must be heading westward, in the direction

of Vishalgad, 40 kilometres from Panhala. He ordered Masud to go in the direction of Vishalgad, the nearest fort where Shivaji would most probably take refuge. Indeed, the palanquin carrying Shivaji reached near Vishalgad almost 23 hours after it had left Panhala. They still had to cross a narrow pass and after that they would be safe but Masud and his cavalrymen had caught up with them.

Baji Prabhu Deshpande offered to guard the pass with 300 of his men, the rest would take Shivaji to the safe confines of Vishalgad. The story is somewhat like the Battle of Thermopylae, where the king of the Greek city state of Sparta leads his badly outnumbered warriors against the massive Persian army, though certain death awaited them.

Masud's horsemen were at a disadvantage; they had very little space to move and they would have to enter in a file in the pass. If they missed death from Baji Prabhu's swords, they had other 300 blades waiting for them. Jauhar's men must have been astonished to see a man standing among the dead, wielding two swords, one in each hand, blocking their way like a wall of flesh. Baji Prabhu held on for two hours with his eyes wandering in the direction of Vishalgad and his ears waiting for the sound of three blasts indicating that his master was safe behind the gates of Vishalgad. Baji Prabhu and his men were killed, but not before Shivaji reached the crest of Vishalgad. From here, Shivaji escaped into the Konkan via trails on the western side of Vishalgad and reached Rajgad sometime in August.

The bird had already flown; a totally demoralised Ali Adil Shah suspected Jauhar of treachery. Trimbak handed over the fort to Adil Shah who let all the Maratha infantrymen trapped in Panhala go free, 'calling it a bloodless victory!' Jauhar, titled Salabat Khan, the invincible one, was killed by the king's forces who attacked Kornool. According to some history books Jauhar committed suicide.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Panhala
Baji Prabhu breathed his last here, later, in his honour Shivaji named the place as 'Pavan Khind', the Blessed Pass'!
Pavan Khind
Vishalgad
Mhasai Rock

Map 4. Shivaji's escape from Panhala to Vishalgad

Shivaji named that pass 'Pavan Khind', the Blessed Pass, blessed by Baji Prabhu's blood.

The battle of Chakan

Shivaji had arrived in Rajgad sometime in August 1660. Soon thereafter, the Mughals attacked Chakan Fort, which is a square enclosure with bastions and towers at four corners with high walls and a deep moat. The only entrance was from the eastern side and passed through some gateways.

The Mughal army had everything needed for the besiegement – a huge number of troopers, large cannon, expert artillerymen, explosives, war elephants with armour helmets to smash open the spiked gates of land-forts, and diggers for making trenches to name a few. To cut a long story short, despite all their strength, the Mughals took 54 days of hard labour, digging trenches, stuffing tunnels with explosives and blasting the fort bastions to take over a small land fort of the Marathas. Firangoji and his few hundred infantrymen fought bravely, throwing rockets, musket shots, bombs and stones from the bastions. They also came out at night to attack the enemy hiding in trenches. Chakan fort was eventually captured at a heavy price with hundreds either dead or wounded. Firangoji Narsala and some of his men escaped at the last moment before Chakan fort fell.

Nothing much happened after that in 1660, but the beginning of 1661 saw a new avatar of Shivaji, a king-to-be and in the hurry to expand his terrain, especially in the Konkan. His march was very sudden and rapid. Seeing his squadrons of infantrymen galloping across the coast subdued many chieftains and *watandars* who meekly surrendered to him. As a matter of fact, they looked up to him as their protector from other invaders.

Meanwhile, Shaista Khan who had returned to Pune and stayed put at Lal Mahal in the midst of his army camp heard Shivaji's Konkan

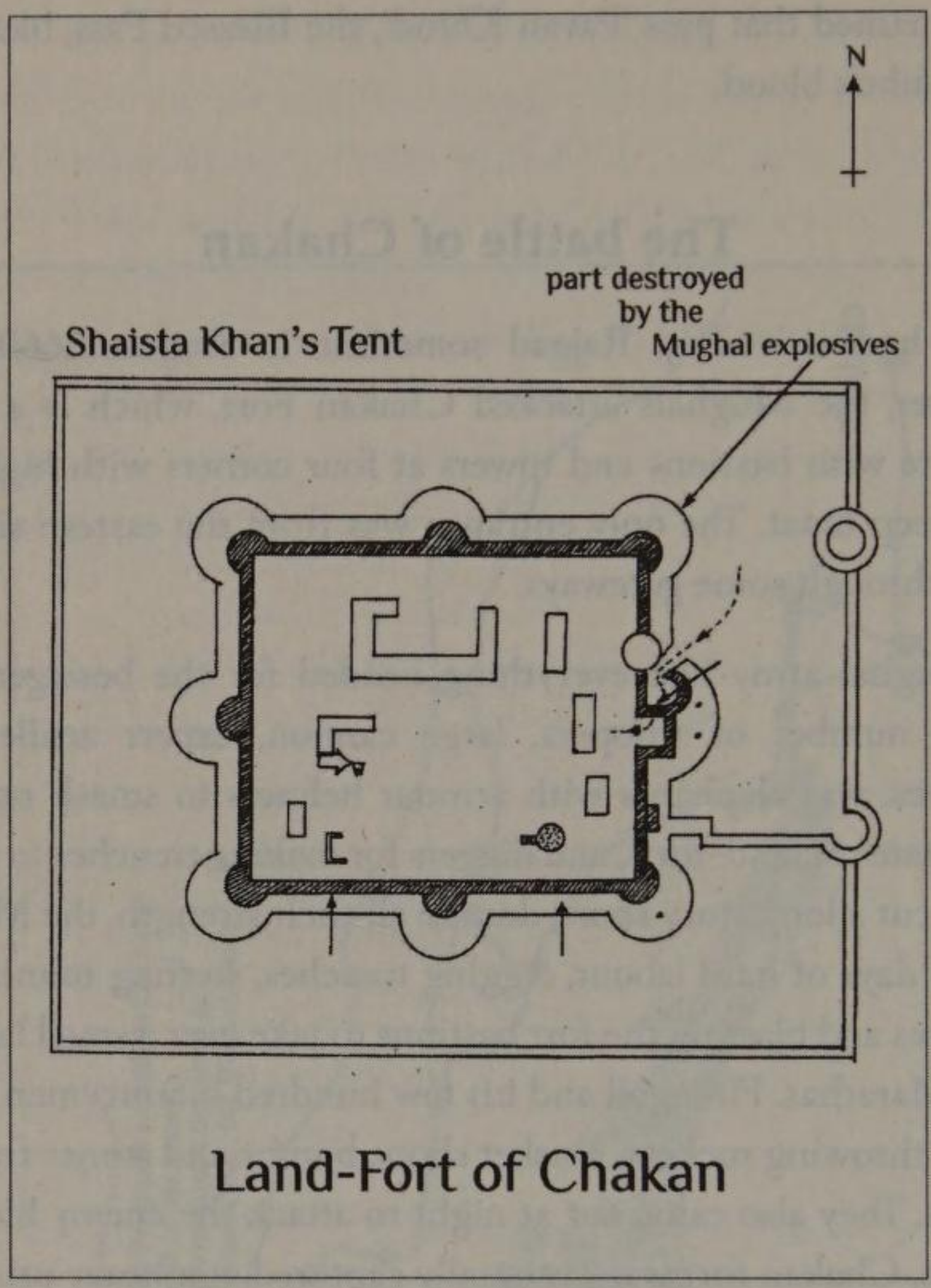

Fig. 7. Understanding the land-fort of Chakan

conquests and thought of getting hold of the Nizamshahi Konkan for the following reasons:

1) Easier than capturing any of nearby hill-forts (even the land fort had proved so tough)
2) It would weaken the Marathas and stop their naval activities
3) Nizamshahi Konkan rightfully belonged to the Mughals

Shaista Khan had a plan: he would make Kartalab Khan, a Mughal mansabdar from Uzbekistan, the general of this expedition. However,

Kartalab Khan was not that accustomed to the perils of the region. In the first week of February 1661 he decided to take his army full of infantrymen, archers, cavalrymen, artillery and baggage loaded in carts and camels through dense forest trails and broken paths between steep rocks and abysmal valleys. It was an unending mountain pass called Umbarkhind – pass of Umber – and not many dared to use it. It was like the barrel of a gun – after you entered, if anyone attacked there was no escape. Shivaji's spies roaming the mountain ghats would give him news on an hourly basis. He and Palkar left Rajgad and by rapid marches arrived at Umberkhind. After Kartalab Khan's army entered the long pass of Umber, the Marathas blocked the mouth and the rear of this stuffed-with-Mughal-army barrel. The Maratha archers hiding in the woods on the mountain slopes looming over the pass started shooting arrows and killing Kartalab's men from above. Kartalab's Konkan expedition came to an abrupt halt. He fled along with his men, leaving behind a large booty of weapons and war animals – as if a gift to the Marathas.

CHAPTER 7

Shockwaves Across the Mughal World

Shivaji did not have time to celebrate the victory. He divided his force and left Palkar behind to deal with the Mughals while he invaded the Adilshahi Konkan with an infantry of 15,000 and a few cavalry squadrons capturing town after town from Danda Rajapuri to Kharepatan, almost reaching the northern suburbs of Goa.

Nizampur, just 40 kilometres from Janjira was raided, the chieftain of Dabhol port was captured; Sangameshwar and Plavani followed. Whoever had helped Jauhar during the Panhala besiegement fled and hid; many saved themselves by paying Shivaji tribute money. Rajapur, where Henry Revington lived was besieged; the Englishmen were taken into captivity, their factory and residences dug up. English traitors who had deceived Shivaji during the Panhala entrapment were thrown in the dungeons of Songad fort.

During this raid, Shivaji collected metals like brass, copper, iron, lead, jewels, silk, woollen cloth, ivory, musk, saffron, sandalwood and spices. During the attack, Shivaji captured four Englishmen – Henry Revington, Richard Taylor, Randolph Taylor and Philip Giffard – and imprisoned them, first at Vasota and later at Songad. Shivaji's officer Raoji Pandit treated them well, but the Marathas demanded ransom for their release. The English prisoners tried to

negotiate their release in exchange for their support in capturing the Danda Rajapuri sea fort. This negotiation could not happen due to the absence of Shivaji, who was busy elsewhere. The languishing English prisoners who had fallen sick due to diarrhoea wrote a letter to the Company's President, who replied that they had been imprisoned for illegally supporting Siddi Jauhar without the Company's permission. Later, when Shivaji learnt that the Company had not officially supported Siddi Jauhar, he ordered the release of the English prisoners in 1663. In February 1663, Shivaji also assured the English that they would enjoy his protection in the future.

Meanwhile, Shaista Khan's daughter Pari Begum was married off to Namdar Khan, son of Jaffar Khan, who was to become the Grand *Wazir* of the Empire. This Namdar Khan was given an assignment by his new father-in-law. As per the orders, Namdar Khan and his 10,000 horsemen galloped in the direction of Kuruvande pass, leaving behind clouds of smoke emitted from 100 burning villages set on fire. His squadrons killed and captured hundreds of villagers, and snatched away cattle, grains and fodder. They were told, *have no mercy, these people need to be killed, burnt or enslaved, for they have played a major role in the miserable defeat of Kartalab Khan, by giving Shiva Bhosale's men the crucial information about our movements. Each one of them is a bloody scout and eager to spy on us.* Namdar carried out his task with utmost brutality.

While all this was happening in the Deccan, Aurangzeb's forces had caught up with Dara Shukoh who was on the run. The Crown Prince was taken into custody near Bolan Pass thousands of kilometres northwest of Delhi when he was trying to flee to Persia. The wretched prince was brought back to Delhi. The crown prince Dara who was titled as 'Shah Bulund Iqbal' – the king-of-lofty-fortunes by his doting father, was tied to a female elephant, smeared with filth, while his son Siphir was placed by his side. This was Aurangzeb's way of taking revenge. Dara, who

used to sit in a *howdah* inlaid with gold with beautiful canopy for sun-protection, mounted on a caparisoned elephant was seen in a most pitiable condition. His humiliation was complete, a sight people would never forget till they died. The pathetic procession was taken through every corner of Delhi while people wept with pity and fear.

A trial was carried out in a Shariah court and several aspects of Dara's blasphemy were discussed – the sentence was given:

Dara has committed a crime against Islam by associating with scholars of other faiths, by translating Hindu scriptures into Persian, by writing the book that preached about Hinduism and Islam being one and the same, by studying Talmud, the New Testament of Jews and for his Sufi writings. The court declared him a threat to public peace and an apostate from Islam. The punishment was death by beheading.

Dara was beheaded. Aurangzeb sent Dara's body in an engraved coffin to their father Shah Jahan who was kept under house arrest at Agra as a present. Meanwhile, many mansabdars and Rajput warriors loyal to Dara like Mirza Raja Jai Singh and Maharaja Jaswant Singh Rathod had joined Aurangzeb. Those who refused to comply were either thrown in the dungeons or killed. Aurangzeb fought a fierce battle with Shah Shuja when Shuja and his army tried to march towards Agra from Bengal, forcing Shuja to flee (known as the battle of Khajwa). Mir Jumla and Aurangzeb's first son Sultan Mohammad were deployed to eliminate Shah Shuja in Bengal. Aurangzeb was trying to get Dara's first son, Sulaiman Shukoh too, who had taken refuge in a Hindu kingdom in Kashmir. Murad Baksh was languishing in Gwalior fort.

During this period Shivaji installed a deity of Godess Bhavani at Pratapgad fort, Moro Pingle performed the religious ceremonies.

The Midnight Attack

1663 had arrived. The Adilshahi rulers had resumed their raids in south Karnataka to annex some more Hindu kingdoms while the Mughals were further ruining Shivaji's terrain. Shaista Khan was not bothered about taking over any hill-forts; he was just living there with his 100,000 men and an equal number of war-animals. If that was not causing enough damage to the region, his parties raided the nearby terrain. History books tell an interesting story. When his son-in-law, Namdar, asked him why his father-in-law was just whiling away his time and not besieging even a single hill-fort of Shivaji's, Shaista Khan gave a strange answer. He said that it was a matter of his survival policy. If they did defeat Shiva Bhosale, Aurangzeb would send them on more difficult campaigns, perhaps to Peshawar, and they might get caught between the Persian army and the radical tribals. Deccan was good, the climate was mild, food was plenty and so they must maintain the status quo.

For the last two years Shaista Khan was fighting the war of slow destruction (attrition). If this continued any longer, Shivaji's revenue system would have faced a total collapse. Meanwhile, Maharaja Jaswant Singh Rathod, who had joined Aurangzeb, had come to the Deccan with his contingent and besieged Kondana fort. Shivaji could not open an offensive against Shaista Khan – the Mughal army was too huge. He could not eliminate Shaista Khan as he eliminated Afzal Khan, because Shaista Khan remained holed up in Lal Mahal and had taken elaborate precautions for his security. The house was guarded by hundreds of armed sentinels despite it being in the midst of the humongous Mughal camp.

How would Shivaji deal with Shaista Khan?

Shivaji executed a bold and dangerous plan to get rid of Shaista Khan. By now, he knew from his spies that the Mughal army camping around Pune was a melting pot of different people –

Afghans, Uzbeks, Rajputs, Abyssinians, Marathas, Persians, and Turks to name a few. The Mughal army was not just divided by their nationalities but also by religion. The Rajputs especially considered themselves royal while the Muslim mansabdars hated the haughty Rajputs. In any case, all mansabdars lived like kings in the camp, and disliked taking orders from each other. The camp itself was huge and was spread over kilometres. It was impossible for the men guarding the outposts to know each and every person or a procession entering the camp. To add to the confusion, hundreds of mansabdars issued orders each day to allow their contingents patrolling the region to enter the camp. The guards never checked anyone for weapons since the contingents returning to the camp were supposed to be armed. The camp, in simple words, was like a huge yet lethargic beast whose stomach was full and head, empty.

'Shivaji paid personal attention to all the details of this hazardous operation' (Palsokar, 2004, pp.123). Shivaji had to get to the heart of the beast, Lal Mahal, Shaista Khan's residence. Shivaji knew the plan of Lal Mahal since he had played hide-n-seek in there as a child. His plan would include his childhood friends, Babaji and Chimnaji Bapuji Deshpande, who had also played in Lal Mahal with him. The main theme of the plan was to attack Lal Mahal at night and kill Shaista Khan. It was the most audacious raid that has happened in our history. For months and weeks the discussions went on about which day, or rather night was most suited for such a daredevil operation, how a large number of Marathas would enter the camp, in what disguise. Who would carry what arms and who would perform which task. Who would eliminate the guards around Lal Mahal, and how they would escape after the deed was done. The only weakness in the entire plan was that Shivaji and his men had no clue where Shaista Khan might be sleeping on that particular night, as he changed his bedroom frequently for safety.

Many might argue that this kind of midnight attack on a house where women and children resided was an act not befitting a warrior

like Shivaji. Morally speaking, in reality, Lal Mahal was Shivaji's home and he was simply getting rid of the intruders.

Shivaji selected his commandos based on their ability as sword fighters, as stealthy operators, as their trustworthiness and their knowledge of Pune and its surrounding region. A man with a cold might jeopardize the plan by coughing or sneezing. A night in the holy month of Ramadan was planned for a reason. It was to be the night of the sixth moon after the no-moon night. Ramadan is the ninth month of the Muslim calendar. It is during this month that they observe a fast that starts at dawn and ends at dusk, feasting after sunset and before sunrise. During the day, usually, people who work outdoors feel hungry and wait for the Iftar feast to break their day-long fast. The night chosen by Shivaji was also the night Shaista Khan had planned to celebrate the anniversary of Aurangzeb's coronation by beating drums every hour.

It was the night between 5 and 6 April 1663 and a crescent moon must have appeared on the dark blue sky. Shivaji started his journey on horse with select cavalrymen from the fort of Kondana (the hill-fort nearest to Pune). Maharaja Jaswant Singh Rathod was camping at the foothills of Kondana with no inkling of what was going on; he was later blamed for treachery. Shivaji's contingent moved on unhindered, dropping detachments on the way for safe withdrawal and escape. They stopped by the banks of the Mutha River and dropped their horses to infiltrate the Mughal camp on foot. Some historians claim that they entered in a wedding procession with loud drum beats and some say a large number of Shivaji's men were brought in as slaves. Whatever the case may be, it seems that after the feast, Shivaji and his men gathered in the lonely backyard of Lal Mahal, killing Shaista Khan's unsuspecting guards.

Shivaji and his men entered the house from the kitchen. The kitchen as Shivaji remembered had a door that lead to the inner courtyard but apparently it was closed with bricks and mud. Chimnaji knew

where the door stood and asked to break it open. Some cooks had come to the kitchen to prepare the pre-dawn meal of Ramadan; they were killed too. As Shivaji and his men entered the courtyard lit by a few lamps, their shadows fell on the wall. Some servants and Shaista Khan's senior wives noticed shadows moving across and started screaming, alerting Shaista Khan who was in his bedroom on the second floor.

Going by the body language of the scared women, Shivaji and his men guessed where Shaista Khan might have been sleeping. They dashed in there and a shuffle followed. One of the senior wives who had managed to enter the bedroom put off the lamps to save her husband. Shaista Khan's eldest son Abul Fath was killed. One of Shaista Khan's wives who tried to save and shield her husband was killed while Shaista Khan escaped with minor injuries; he lost his fingers and prestige though.

Khan also lost two younger sons, a son-in-law, a few wives and 50 guards while Shivaji lost 6 of his men and 60 were wounded. It was a chaotic situation and no one knew who the enemy was since the midnight attackers escaped from the kitchen, melted into the camp and exited from the outposts before the outpost guards were alerted. Shivaji and his men collected their horses left by the banks of the River and galloped towards Kondana picking up the cavalry detachments left behind for safety.

To give this sequence of events an interesting perspective, compare this raid to the way Osama Bin Laden was hunted down and killed at Abbottabad and you will see striking similarities. The only difference being that Shivaji did not have any modern military helicopters, guns, or surveillance equipment. His commandos were not equipped with night-vision goggles, or helmet-mounted video cameras. Both regarded as 'most audacious military stunts', let's take a look at what made them truly indomitable.

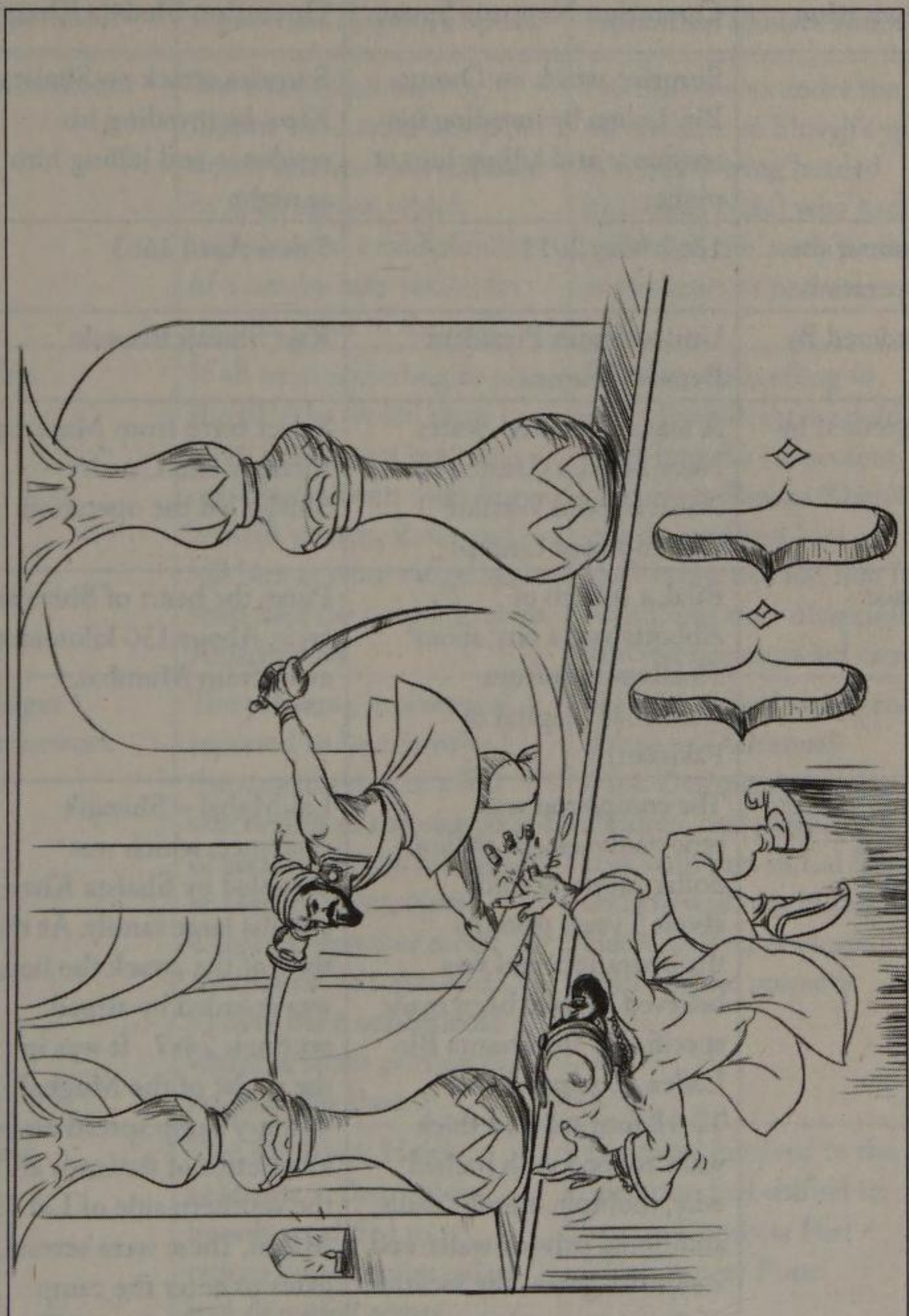

Fig. 8. 'Operation Shaista Khan' at Lal Mahal

Operation	**Operation Neptune Spear**	**Operation Shaista Khan**
	Surprise attack on Osama Bin Laden by invading his residence and killing him at night	Surprise attack on Shaista Khan by invading his residence and killing him at night
Date of the Operation	1& 2 May 2011	5 & 6 April 1663
Ordered By	United States President Barack Obama	Raja Shivaji Bhosale
Executed by	A team of United States Navy SEALs (United States Naval Special Warfare Development Group)	Select force from Maratha Infantry and Cavalry – Shivaji led the operation
Place	Bilal, a suburb of Abbottabad; a city about 50 kilometres from Islamabad (capital of Pakistan).	Pune, the heart of Shivaji's *jagir*. About 150 kilometres away from Mumbai.
Ground Zero	The compound was reportedly a large million-dollar property, built about 5 years prior to the operation, and was believed to have been made specifically for Osama Bin Laden. Equipped with 12-18 foot tall and thick walls topped with barbed wire, multiple interior walls, additional privacy walls, and 2 security gates. The location of the compound was near or within the jurisdiction of Abbottabad Cantonment, controlled by the Pakistan military.	Lal Mahal – Shivaji's residence, which was occupied by Shaista Khan and his large family. At the time of the attack the house was guarded by armed sentinels 24x7. It was in the midst of the Mughal military camp spread across kilometres of flatlands at the southern side of Lal Mahal. There were several gates to enter the camp. Many people from different ethnicities, religions, castes and creed were under the Mughal banner, Abyssinians, Afghans, Rajputs, Persians, Uzbeks, and local Marathas.

Operation	**Operation Neptune Spear**	**Operation Shaista Khan**
Surveillance	The compound used by Osama bin Laden was put under extensive surveillance by CIA agents, which included the establishment of a nearby safe-house, for months prior to the raid.	Lal Mahal was under the surveillance of Shivaji's spies (a military wing headed by Bahirji Naik) who had infiltrated the camp perhaps as masseurs or barbers.
Plan	If all went according to plan, the SEALs would drop from helicopters into the compound, overpower bin Laden's guards, shoot and kill him at close range, and then take the corpse back to Afghanistan.	If all went according to plan, Shivaji's men would enter into the compound, overpower Shaista Khan's guards, confront him at close range and kill him by sword, and then disappear into the overcrowded camp.
Target homework	The planning process was reported to have involved the construction of a full size replica of the compound or sections of the compound at Harvey Point, North Carolina. Another mock compound was also said to have been constructed within a secret portion of Bagram Air Base.	Shivaji involved two men, Babaji and Chimnaji Bapu Deshpande who, as children, had played hide & seek with him in Lal Mahal and knew all the hiding places, as well as escape routes of the property.
Base	Two US Black Hawk helicopters, their rotors heavily modified to reduce detection by radar, had skimmed across northwestern Pakistan from American bases in Afghanistan after President Barack Obama gave the final go-ahead for Operation Neptune Spear.	The party involved in the operation had shifted its base to Kondana Fort – which is near Pune.

Operation	**Operation Neptune Spear**	**Operation Shaista Khan**
Stealthy Start	Before dawn on May 2, a pair of Blackhawk helicopters carrying two dozen Navy seals left Jalalabad, Afghanistan, and entered Pakistani airspace using stealth technology to evade Pakistan's radar systems.	Shivaji and his men left Kondana a few hours before they would launch an attack on Shaista Khan from close quarters. It was done so stealthily that Maharaja Jaswant Singh Rathod who had camped at the foothills of Kondana had no inkling of what was happening.
To the target	Black Hawk landed and 24 commandos jumped to the ground, accompanied by a translator and an explosives-sniffing dog. The men split into smaller teams and one group swept towards a guesthouse.	The Maratha infantrymen reached the outskirts of Pune on horse. They entered the camp in a wedding procession as well as 'captured slaves' – then split in smaller groups only to cross the camp and assemble at the back of Lal Mahal.
Striking Similarities	Commandos stormed the main building, killing Kuwaiti's (see the following paragraph) brother – known as Tareq Khan – on the ground floor and then shooting dead bin Laden's 20-year-old son Khalid as he rushed down the stairs towards them. Abu Ahmed al-Kuwaiti, the personal messenger for several years for bin Laden. He offered armed resistance during the raid, opening fire from behind the guesthouse door before he was slain in a hail of bullets.	Shivaji and his men entered through the kitchen. Shaista Khan's 20-year-old son Abul Fath was slain as he rushed down the stairs (Shaista Khan's family lived on the top floor of the two-storey Lal Mahal).

Operation	**Operation Neptune Spear**	**Operation Shaista Khan**
The 'wife' factor	With bullets flying, a piece of shrapnel or debris then struck Osama Bin Laden's screaming 12-year-old daughter Safia in her foot or ankle. Her mother, bin Laden's fourth wife, rushed at the advancing men and was shot in the lower leg.	Shaista Khan's senior wife started screaming to warn her husband who was sleeping in another bedroom perhaps with a younger wife.
Chaos	With bin Laden retreating into the room, two shots to the chest and above the left eye cut him down – a "double tap" in military terminology. The SEALs made a preliminary facial identification that the dead man was bin Laden and a team leader delivered news of the kill via a microphone in his helmet. The message was relayed to CIA director.	With Shaista Khan retreating into the adjacent balcony all that the Marathas could do was cut the nearby air with forward and backward blows with their swords. Shaista Khan escaped but his three fingers were cut. Thirty or forty men and women were killed. Shivaji too lost six men.
Escape	By Helicopter designed to escape radar detection	Camp was thrown into utter confusion; the Marathas exited from the camp shouting 'Enemy, enemy', as if they were chasing the enemy. A few hundred oxen were unleashed with burning torches tied to their horns near Pune. Shaista Khan's cavalrymen ended up chasing the animals while Shivaji and his men escaped.

Operation	**Operation Neptune Spear**	**Operation Shaista Khan**
Aftermath	Pakistani security officials arrived to chaotic scenes. Three women – all believed to be wives of bin Laden – and at least 12 children were left behind, some with their hands tied and mouths taped, others wailed hysterically. Four bodies were strewn around the compound, blood pouring from their wounds.	After the Marathas fled and melted into the over-populated camp, there was hysterical wailing at Lal Mahal, the floor of which was strewn with limbs and torsos and heads
Operation Neptune Spear reference: Sherwell, P. (2011)		

'News of this daredevil raid resounded throughout India. It must have resulted in an immense increase in Shivaji's prestige and fame' (Mehendale, 2011, pp.256). A frightened Shaista Khan moved to Aurangabad and blamed Maharaja Jaswant Singh Rathod of deceit to save his own face. An enraged Aurangzeb dismissed Shaista Khan from the *subhedari* of the Deccan and transferred him to Bengal. Aurangzeb's second son, prince Muazzam was sent to Aurangabad as the new Mughal subhedar.

A lot had happened in the north since then. Aurangzeb's first son Mohammad Sultan, who was sent to Bengal with Mir Jumla, had run away to his uncle's (Shah Shuja) camp and married his daughter. Mohammad Sultan was caught by Mir Jumla and sent to Aurangzeb as a prisoner. Aurangzeb sent him to Gwalior prison, where years later, at the age of 37, he passed away in a depressed state of mind.

Meanwhile, Shah Shuja and his family had run away in the direction of Arakan (present-day Myanmar). Some history books say that on the way, the family was captured by cannibals and eaten while some say that they were killed by kings of Myanmar – Shuja's wives and daughters were first impregnated and then starved to death.

Mir Jumla had passed away due to an infectious disease too. Dara Shukoh's son was captured from Kashmir and sent to Gwalior prison; he was put on heavy doses of opium and he died within a year. Murad Baksh was prosecuted for the murder of Mir Bakshi (the paymaster general of Gujarat), who had refused to comply with Murad's exorbitant demands for funds as the subhedar of that state. Murad was found guilty by Aurangzeb's Sharia court and executed.

To Surat!

It was the year 1664 and Shivaji was in dire need of funds. Shaista Khan's invasion and stay at Pune for the past few years had broken the spine of the agriculture industry and revenue system of the region. His navy was expanding and he needed to employ sailors and marines for his expanding navy. He had marked the islet of Kurute near the coast of Malvan in Konkan and plans to build a sea-fort like Janjira were underway. Shivaji was of the opinion that if he had to strengthen his army to stop the Mughal invasions then the Mughal must foot the bill for the expansion of his army. And so, he decided to sack the financial capital of the Mughals – the port city of Surat in Gujarat!

Surat was the Mughal *subha* of Gujarat. The port town on the southern banks of the Tapi River where the river turns westward toward the sea was the pride of the Empire. From the riverside, Surat looked lush with palm trees swaying with the sea breeze. It was 15 miles inland from Swally port where the Tapi River meets the ocean. It was a convenient place for exchange of goods from Central India and the Deccan. Merchandise from Kashmir, Lahore, Agra, and south India passed through and commodities from Europe and China came to Surat. The port city started to increase in its importance due to the establishment of trading factories by the European travellers and also due to its trade relations with South East Asia and the Middle East. The main imports were quicksilver, porcelain cowries or seashells

and the custom duty alone brought 1.2 million rupees per year into the Mughal Emperor's coffers. Hindus were in the majority at Surat. They were occupied in trade and other lines of work linked with administration of revenue departments where mathematical and commercial knowledge was necessary, i.e. as accountants and in the mint, as an examiner to check the purity of gold and silver. Among the Hindus, the Banias were the most noted inhabitants of Surat, who were merchants by birth. Muslims were generally engaged in the administration – military as well as civil. Parsis were a minority but most of them were wealthy and industrious. They were the weavers of Surat who made fine, export quality silks and other cloth materials supplying to the English factory at Surat. Even the Dutch and the French had their factories at Surat, established under the *farmans* of the Mughal Emperors.

Shivaji's chief-of-intelligence Bahirji Naik and his men practically lived in Surat for a couple of weeks gathering information, perhaps as barbers, masseurs or even as beggars. Naik must have observed how the subhedar of Surat, a corrupt and callous Inayat Khan lived in a solitary fortress enclosed between the turrets. Inayat was required to keep a strong force of cavalrymen to defend the town but the reality was different. He was to build a high wall strengthened with ramparts and watchtowers around Surat and had taken a huge grant from the Emperor for this purpose. However, it was rumoured that the money was spent on lavish weddings of his children. The city continued to remain 'protected' by an old and crumpling wall. There were no war-ships guarding the waters of the Tapi River. Naik might have visited a market near the fortress and seen how large sums of money changed hands and how merchants arrived from far and near on horses, camels, elephants and oxen carts. Shops were stuffed with pearls, jewellery, precious stones, gold, silver, spices, textile, sandalwood, saffron, perfumes, silk, carpets and other such valuable merchandise. Mountains of elephant tusks, turtle shells to make shields and medicinal rhinoceros horns were kept separately in

wholesale outlets. There were massive stationary shops selling only paper, feathered ink-pens and indigo jars as thousands of oxen lined up around the market either to deliver or dispatch goods.

The inner city or downtown was full of overcrowded huts roofed with branches of palm trees. Naik must have found out that some of these 'huts' belonged to shopkeepers or exchange dealers who hid their wealth in their modest homes on purpose. At one place there were a few Jain temples surrounded by houses made of better quality bricks; Naik must have found out that a Parsi broker to the king of Bantam lived in one of those and so did the spice-king Virji Vora who was the richest of them all. Naik must have roamed the streets on the river banks lined with homes of wealthy Muslims like Haji Zahid Baig, Haji Kasim, and Kwaja Minas hiding behind high walls, some screened with lattices of wood or glass made of oyster shells.

It was 6 December 1663. Shivaji and his 8,000 horsemen left Rajgad in the direction of Surat. To mislead his enemies he declared that he was going to Aurangabad but he and his men galloped towards Nasik. There are historical references that he visited the famous temple of Trimbakeshwar near Nasik on 31 December and on the same day took the upcountry route to descend into Konkan. Once in Konkan, the Marathas travelled northwards by coastal track through forests to reach the outskirts of Surat on 4 January – thus covering 200 kilometres in less than a week on horse. On the way when people inquired, the Marathas declared that they were the troopers of Mughal mansabdars!

The Marathas camped a few kilometres away from Surat and sent a message to Inayat to send the three richest men: Haji Zahid Beg, Virji Vora and Haji Qasim to him for negotiations. Inayat refused and instead invited all the rich of Surat to come and stay inside the fort (for a fee). On 6 January 1664, Shivaji's men attacked Surat. The dispatches made by the English President and Council of Surat to the Company say that '*This sudden surprise struck such a terror to*

all, that the Governor and the rest of the Kings ministers and eminent merchants betook themselves to the Castle (Inayat's fortress). The next news was the rebel had sent two men and a letter, requiring the Governor, the three eminent merchants to come in person immediately and conclude with him; else he immediately threatened the whole town with fire and sword; which he presently put in practice, not receiving a present answer' (Anon., 1931, p. 66).

An English letter dated 28 January 1664 (Gokhale, 1979, pp. 24) says '*The town's folks left their homes and belongings and fled with their families, some upon the river in vessels and boats, some disappeared in to the nearby villages, and within just a few hours the whole town was deserted.*'

The plunder continued until 8 January. During this raid, Shivaji spared the European establishments. Houses of Virji Vohra, Haji Zabid Baig and Haji Kasim were dug up. The house of Mohandas Parekh, known for his charity work was spared.

Some history books say that Inayat had tried to fire explosives from the old cannon placed on the scaffoldings built around his fort to scare off the Marathas and those explosives landed on his own city. The Marathas fired at the fortress to prevent Inyat's men from sallying out and the fort garrison returned more fire. Dutch records say that this did more damage to the city (Sen, 1977, p. 376). The Marathas had captured many traders who refused them information of the hidden wealth. They were tortured for money. There is a story within a story: after two days of plunder Inayat woke up and sent his envoy to Shivaji to negotiate. In the meeting the envoy suddenly attacked Shivaji, but Shivaji's vigil guards chopped off his hand. The envoy fell on Shivaji, bathing Shivaji in his blood. People thought that Shivaji was killed by Inayat's man. There was mayhem, and the angry Marathas cut off hands and legs of many a captured merchant of Surat; they stopped only when Shivaji himself showed them that he was alive and unharmed.

English dispatches from Surat to Bengal on 30 April 1664 say (Anon., 1931 p.87): '*Here in January last happened a very strange surprise. Sevagee, the grand Rebel of Deccan conveying himself with 6 or 7000 horse and foot within a very few miles of this town of Surrat and in a short space entered with fire and sword, burnt down the greatest part of it and carried away vast riches in silver, gold and Jewells. The Townes people, man, women and childe, leaving their houses, fled to secure their lives. We were also sent too for a present which, refusing to give had many threats that he would erase our house to the ground and not leave a man alive. But in despite of him we maintained our own without sustaining any considerable loss except in the hindrance we had in the dispatch of our Europe ships.*'

It is estimated that the Marathas carried away 2.5 million rupees along with hundreds of mules laden with gold, silver, diamonds and other precious stones.

Soon after Shivaji's return to Rajgad he received sad news. On 23 January 1664, his father Shahaji Bhosale had passed away – he was thrown off by his horse on a full gallop. His mother Jija Bai wanted to perform *sati*[35] but Shivaji prevented her from doing so. It was a tragic time for the Bhosale family. A Dutch letter dated 25 July 1664 (Sardesai, 2002, p. 509) goes: '*The old preying bird Shahaji, father of the great rebel Shivaji, was thrown by his horse on a full gallop, which fall hurt him so much that after a few days he had to pay for it with his life. We do not think that the king* (Adilshahi) *had gone in the 'mourning', for the said accident, but rather he wished to get rid of other rebellious ring-leader of that sort in similar manner.*'

During these volatile times, Shivaji's naval dream was turning into a reality. It shows that Shivaji was a fine example of an English expression, 'When the going gets tough, the tough get going!' With

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35 *Sati* is an archaic Indian funeral custom where a widow immolates herself on her husband's pyre, or commits suicide in another fashion shortly after her husband's death.

Surat funds at hand, Shivaji focused on the Konkan and once again started his naval enterprise with renewed zest.

War ships cannot function unless they have well-defended bases for shelter during rough weather. Repair and maintenance was equally important. Shivaji planned invincible sea-forts and the sites chosen were surrounded by the sea (at least from three sides), and each had just one entrance, usually the strongest point of the fort. In 1664, Shivaji started building the sea-fort of Sindhudurg, which took three years to complete. Built on an islet called Kurute, half a kilometre inside the sea, off the coast of Malvan in Sindhudurg district, it was lying in a bay, studded with rocks and reefs. For casting the foundation, 150,000 kilograms of molten iron and lead were poured over the stones. The fort, which still stands today, is spread over 48 acres and is protected by kilometres-long wall (12 feet wide and 30 feet high), strengthened by 42 bastions. The main entrance was constructed in such a way that from afar it looked like an unbroken wall. There were underground tunnels and escape routes built inside the walls. When the fort was built, it had sweet water wells and manmade lakes for harvesting rain. Vijayadurg was another sea-fort rebuilt and restored by Shivaji. It stands on a spit of land which was separated from mainland Konkan by a natural, water-filled trench. The massive and formidable outer walls were constantly washed by giant waves. On one side, a round tower rose to the highest point. The fort was strengthened by Shivaji with triple lines of walls and 27 watch towers.

Over the years, Shivaji built as well as restored many a sea-forts and conquered and possessed the entire Konkan province. Shivaji made a total reformation in the areas and formed new provincial divisions. This entire province was divided into nine *subhas*, namely, Subha Bhivandi, Subha Kalyan, Subha Chaul, Subha Javali, Subha Rajpuri, Subha Dabhol, Subha Rajapur-Prabhavali, Subha Kudal, and Subha Phonde (in Goa) and Subha Ankola (in Karwar).

Some observations of Professor PK Ghanekar, someone who has dedicated his life towards the study of the forts in India and has written several books in Marathi on the same: the molten lead and iron poured over the foundation stones of Sindhudurg fort was to make the structure absolutely stable – even tsunami waves might fail to shake the structure. Shivaji spent millions of rupees for this purpose; it was Shivaji's sea-capital. The approach to this fort is sneaky and dangerous for the big ships trying to get close. The mortar of Padmadurga is made in such a way that it is immune to erosion. Even the stones are eroded by a few inches, but the mortar is untouched by centuries of onslaught of the aggressive waves.

At Colaba, Alibaug the fort wall has no mortar, and the slits between the stones are open. It was done for a purpose – when giant waves (each with thousands of litres of water) dash across the wall, some water seeps in through the slits, defusing the pressure on the wall. The Khanderi fort is surrounded by a shallow sea – huge boulders are put in the sea surrounding the fort to offer resistance to the dashing waves, so by the time they reach the wall they are much calmer.

At this time in history, many more events were taking place in the Konkan. Mirjan, as explained earlier was a port south of Goa famous for its exports of goods such as pepper, saltpeter (used in explosives) and betel nuts to Surat. Mirjan was annexed by the ruler of Bednur, which was known for its high quality pepper. Shivappa Nayak ruled Bednur for almost 50 years and had extended his kingdom from all sides had conquered the entire south Karnataka country. He had also captured some of the Adilshahi's forts. Shivappa passed away in 1660 and his son Bhadrappa was murdered by his advisors. Ali Adil Shah did not waste this opportunity and sent his generals Behlul Khan and others to capture Bedur with full force.

Aurangzeb was aware of the growing power of Shivaji in Konkan. 'Aurangzeb had written several times to the Adilshah asking him to send an army against Shivaji and promising him to redeem the

30,000 *hons* of annual tribute if he did so. He (Aurangzeb) had also threatened that he would lead an army in person against the Adilshahi Sultanate and would not stop till it was completely conquered, if the Adilshah refused to comply' (Mehendale, 2011, p. 282).

This was the time Shivaji entered southern Konkan with full force. Lakham Sawant, the chief of Kudal near Goa, who had earlier made peace with Shivaji and given him the charge of Kudal, had now changed his mind and joined the Adilshahi forces to fight Shivaji. Khawas Khan, (son of late Khan Mohammad, the Grand *Wazir* of Adilshahi and now son-in-law of Rustum-i-Zaman) arrived from Bijapur with his 10,000 cavalry and joined Sawant's 12,000 infantry. Meanwhile Baji Ghorpade, jagirdar of Mudhol (in Konkan) and a general of Adilshahi marched towards Kudal with a contingent of 1,500 well mounted cavalry. This was the same Ghorpade who had arrested Shahaji Bhosale in 1648 and taken him prisoner at Bijapur. Shivaji had old scores to settle; he surprised Ghorpade by attacking Mudhol, Ghorpade's *jagir*. Ghorpade returned to rescue his terrain and was killed and many male members of the Ghorpade family were slain. This battle came to be known as 'the massacre of Ghorpades'. More than a thousand of his horses were taken by Shivaji as spoils-of-war. Flush with victory, Shivaji's forces burst into nearby regions and vigorously attacked several petty vassals of the Adilshahi, including the Sawants of Kudal. In any case, after getting the news of Ghorpade's defeat, Khawas Khan had run away to Bijapur. The defeated Sawants later fled into nearby jungles, many other chieftains following suit. After Khawas Khan's retreat, Shivaji attacked and plundered the rich towns of Vengurla, Malwan and then Hubli.

In February 1665 Shivaji left Sindhudurg fort with a fleet of 85 frigates and three large ships. His fleet passed Goa, Karwar, Kumbhe, Honavar, and Bhatkal and reached a harbour called Ganguli on 14 February. The Marathas left their ships in the harbour and marched on foot – suddenly appearing in front of Basnur, the main

port of the Bednur kingdom, which had recently been taken over by the Adilshahi. It was also a market town in Karnataka famous for its rich merchants. The merchants paid him a heavy tribute (some say he collected more money at Basnur than in Surat). While on their way back, Shivaji sent back his armada, keeping only a few frigates in the nearby sea. He and his 4,000 infantry then proceeded to march into Ankola near Gokarn Mahabaleshwar in present day Karnataka.

'As the English merchants write, "Deccan and all south coast are embroiled in civil wars, king against king and country against country, and Shivaji reigns victoriously and uncontrolled, for he is terror to all the kings and princes round about"' (Sardesai, 2002, p.726).

CHAPTER 8

Cataclysmic Meeting

HS Sardesai (2002, p.150) writes, Mirza Raja Jai Singh's capacity for sacrifice on behalf of his sovereign was no less considerable but it lacked the sublime quality that is derived from the championship of worthy causes. It is for this reason we look upon this eminent Rajput, not as a person worthy of emulation but a tragic figure who wantonly or unwittingly spurred a distinguished place in history to subordinate his self to his country's wider interest.

Shaista Khan's shameful failure and the sacking of Surat by Shivaji were agonizing events for Aurangzeb. On his birthday in 1664, in the midst of several mansabdars who had come for their promotions and transfers, Aurangzeb appointed Mirza Jai Singh to annihilate Shivaji. Many other famous Mughal warriors like Diler Khan, Daud Khan Qureshi, and Raja Rai Singh Sisodia among others would accompany Mirza. At this point in time, Mirza was nearing 60 and he and the Mughals had had a long history. He belonged to the royal family of Amber, the pride of Rajasthan, and had joined the Mughals at the tender age of 13. A *kachhwa* Rajput, he was a *suryavanshi*, born into the solar lineage that linked him to the descendants of Lord Rama. A linguist who could speak chaste Persian and Turkish, Mirza was pickled in court intrigues as well as etiquette. He was one of the rare Mughal generals who could lead a Mughal army divided by religion; Muslim mansabdars did not get along with their Rajput counterparts. He had switched

sides and had helped Aurangzeb in a war-of-succession. He had won several battles for Shah Jahan, from Balkh in Central Asia to Bijapur in the Deccan, from Kandahar in the west to Mungir in the east. Now this aging war veteran was donning his armor to crush Shivaji.

On 9 January 1664, Mirza crossed the Narmada, on 10 February he arrived near Fort Daulatabad and on 3 March he was in Pune. By the end of March he was in Saswad where he had planned to camp with his vast Mughal army. His cavalcade was a city on the move – a sea of cavalrymen, a dense mass of infantrymen, caparisoned elephants with *howdahs* carrying the mansabdars, followed by covered palanquins carrying their families, all this surrounded by slaves, servants, orderlies and cooks. Strings of oxen, mules and donkeys loaded with goods, coolies with water-skins, and camels carrying cannon. At the rear, hundreds of thousands of cows, sheep and goats followed; they were meant to be slaughtered for food. Above the cavalcade, the moss-green imperial banners fluttered with the wind, the rising suns and crouching lions embroidered on the silken cloth causing ripples in the Deccan air.

All through the journey from Delhi to the Deccan, Mirza contemplated his war strategy. He had asked Emperor Aurangzeb for total control of the Deccan. It was unprecedented that he was made the authority over promotions, punishments and transfers of the mansabdars, the payment for the troops and the regulation of the Deccan *mansabs* and was virtually made the subhedar of the Mughal-occupied Deccan. Mirza's strategy was 'multi-offence' attacks that would leave no room for failure. He would not venture into the Konkan or stay at Pune but camp on the eastern borders of the Bhosale *jagir* (and the western borders of the Adilshahi kingdom). This is because the terrain here was relatively flat. It was easier to face the Marathas on the plains than in the mountains where they could prove to be dangerous.

With the Mughal base camp between the Bhosale *jagir* and the Adilshahi kingdom, he could keep an eye on both, lest they form an alliance. The campsite was chosen – near a town called Saswad, a few kilometres away from the foothills of Purandar fort. Mirza would also either negotiate, or threaten, or bribe all of Shivaji's enemies as well as his generals, like the Adilshahi king, the Qutbshahi king, the Portuguese, Afzal Khan's relatives, Morey's relatives (hiding at Bijapur), and the Siddis of Janjira to name a few, and make them part of his anti-Shivaji campaign. He would lure the powerful jagirdars and watandars from Shivaji's terrain by giving them promises of high positions in the Mughal army to bring them under the Mughal banner. He would play a double game – he would also entice the watandars of Karnataka to desert the Adilshahi and join the Mughals, because he knew that once Shivaji was annihilated, Aurangzeb would ask him to capture the Adilshahi. He was also thinking of slaying Shivaji's people in large numbers by making special squadrons of trained-to-slaughter cavalrymen and unleash them all through Shivaji's territory. Last but not least, Mirza would maintain regular communications with the Emperor by writing him letters on a daily basis about every development. Mirza had thought of other things like a wise general. He wanted to capture one of Shivaji's hill forts, preferably Purandar, to show Aurangzeb that he was capable. He also would keep away Prince Muazzam[36] from the campaign (so that the prince did not take any credit).

After arriving at Saswad, Mirza gave Daud Quereshi and Qutb-ud Din Khan the responsibility of unleashing terror in Shivaji's terrain. Rai Singh, Amar Singh, Sharja Khan, Achal Singh and the others were briefed. 8,000 men were divided into eight flying columns, each moving towards different villages.

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[36] Muazzam was Aurangzeb's son from his Hindu wife, Nawab Bai, and was the Mughal *subhedar* of the Deccan. In any case, he was too preoccupied with hashish and alchohol parties as well as his hunting expeditions to really care about anything else.

Mirza deployed 20,000 men to besiege Purandar. He also sent men to guard several outposts to reduce the movement available to Maratha squadrons in the region surrounding Purandar for the protection for his besiegers hiding in the trenches. He called his artillery chief, an Italian named Nikolaou Manucci along with Diler Khan and disclosed the fact that Purandar fort had a flaw and using that weakness, it could be captured.

Purandar is 1,370 metres high above the sea-level and 760 metres above the surrounding plains. Its fortified top is the citadel, and a rock rising above the citadel is called Khandakada, an extension of the citadel. The lower fort is almost 300 metres at the lower level: The girth of the lower fort is about 5-6 kilometres, protected by a winding wall fortified with ramparts and watchtowers that are always guarded by archers. To the north, the ledge of the lower fort widens and has barracks of the fort garrison. This ledge or terrace is bound by a high hill that starts rising from the base of the steep hill below the north-eastern watchtower built on Khandakada. It runs about a mile eastwards in a narrow ridge, ending in a small flatland. That is Vajragad, meaning 'the weapon fort'. There is a shallow ravine between the two forts called Bhairav Khind. Two watchtowers (painted black and white) built on Purandar's lower cliffs, below the Khandakada face the Vajragad terrace, which is at a lower level. If Vajragad was captured and the two towers were blasted, they could get entry into the lower fort of Purandar. Once there they could easily capture the Purandar citadel. In simple words, the weapon called 'Vajragad' could be used to cut Purandar's jugular.

After a month of vigorous efforts, Vajragad fell into the hands of the Mughals and three large cannons (named Abdulla Khan, Fath Lashkar and Haveli) were taken to its crest. Meanwhile, Daud Quereshi and Qutb-ud-Din Khan's detachments continued to devastate Shivaji's territory by looting and burning hundreds of villages. Thousands of young people were taken as slaves. Shivaji,

Palkar and Pingle tried hard to stop the ruin but the Mughal army was too huge. The Marathas inside the fort remained busy defending Purandar from the Mughals who had reached the top of Vajragad by deploying hundreds of archers to the black and white towers. They also buried explosives between the towers so that the Mughals could not just cross the ravine and enter the gates of Purandar.

Around the end of May 1664, the Mughals dug trenches on the Vajragad extension, coming close to the towers and as per the advice of Mirza and Mannuci a 1,200 feet tall *damdama* (wooden scaffoldings) was erected to come face to face with the towers. The three guns were positioned on the scaffoldings and were fired. The crossfire that ensued made the explosives buried between the black and white towers explode. The towers fell, instantly killing the Marathas minding them. The Mughals could now enter the lower fort of Purandar and they did.

Murarbaji Deshpande, the administrative manager of the Morey family from Javali had joined Shivaji when Javali was captured. He was then the commandant of Purandar. The granaries were on the verge of getting empty and with death staring at his face, Murarbaji's spirit had remained undaunted. He had a plan to face the Mughal army (estimated 5,000 troopers commanded by Diler Khan) advancing to the gates of the upper fort. He had taken his men and others residing on Purandar (a few thousand soldiers of fort garrison and others including families of fort-residents) to the upper fort and closed the gates shut. When the Mughals reached the lower fort and started preparing to fire at the gates of the citadel with cannon, Murarabaji took a few hundred of his best swordsmen and banged open the gates, attacking Diler Khan and his men. This happened suddenly, like lightning and in that chaotic battle the Marathas slaughtered countless Afghan troopers of Diler Khan.

There is an interesting story about this: Murarbaji advanced towards Diler Khan who shouted and asked Murarbaji to stop. Diler Khan

had not seen such a quick and decisive swordsman like Murarbaji and said, 'what a fine swordsman Allah has created!' He offered Murarbaji a high position in the Mughal army, but Murarbaji shouted back saying he was not for sale. Within moments, wielding his sword, Murarbaji dashed forward towards Diler Khan. The fine Maratha warrior was killed by an arrow shot from the bow of one of Diler Khan's bodyguards.

Murarbaji had ordered his men that if he fell they must run back to the upper fort and close shut the gates. They did just that.

This entire episode confirms that Shivaji's soldiers were dedicated to him with their heart and soul, and did not jump the fence for money or positions. It was indeed a rare phenomenon in times when soldiers and their generals could be easily bought over. 'Shivaji had the magnetic power which only true leaders of men possess and which neither bandits nor mad fanatics can ever claim. He attracted towards himself all that was hopeful and aspiring in the land without distinction of class or caste or creed or colour. His very councilors were selected from all great communities which constituted the strength of the country. His touch made very grossest of men feel the cleansing fire burning in them' (Ranade, 1961, p.25).

Diler Khan lost a few hundred men in the battle and about an equal number were injured and writhing in pain. Diler Khan had no other option but to retreat and come back to Vajragad.

Purandar Peace Treaty and after

Mirza's multiple offence strategy was working, with the exception of many of Shivaji's loyal warriors refusing to join him even with Mirza enticing them with big money and high positions. The devastation of his territory, merciless slaughter of his people, and the loss of his brave Murarbaji Deshpande made Shivaji think of political alternatives. His first priority was to stop the Mughal massacre of

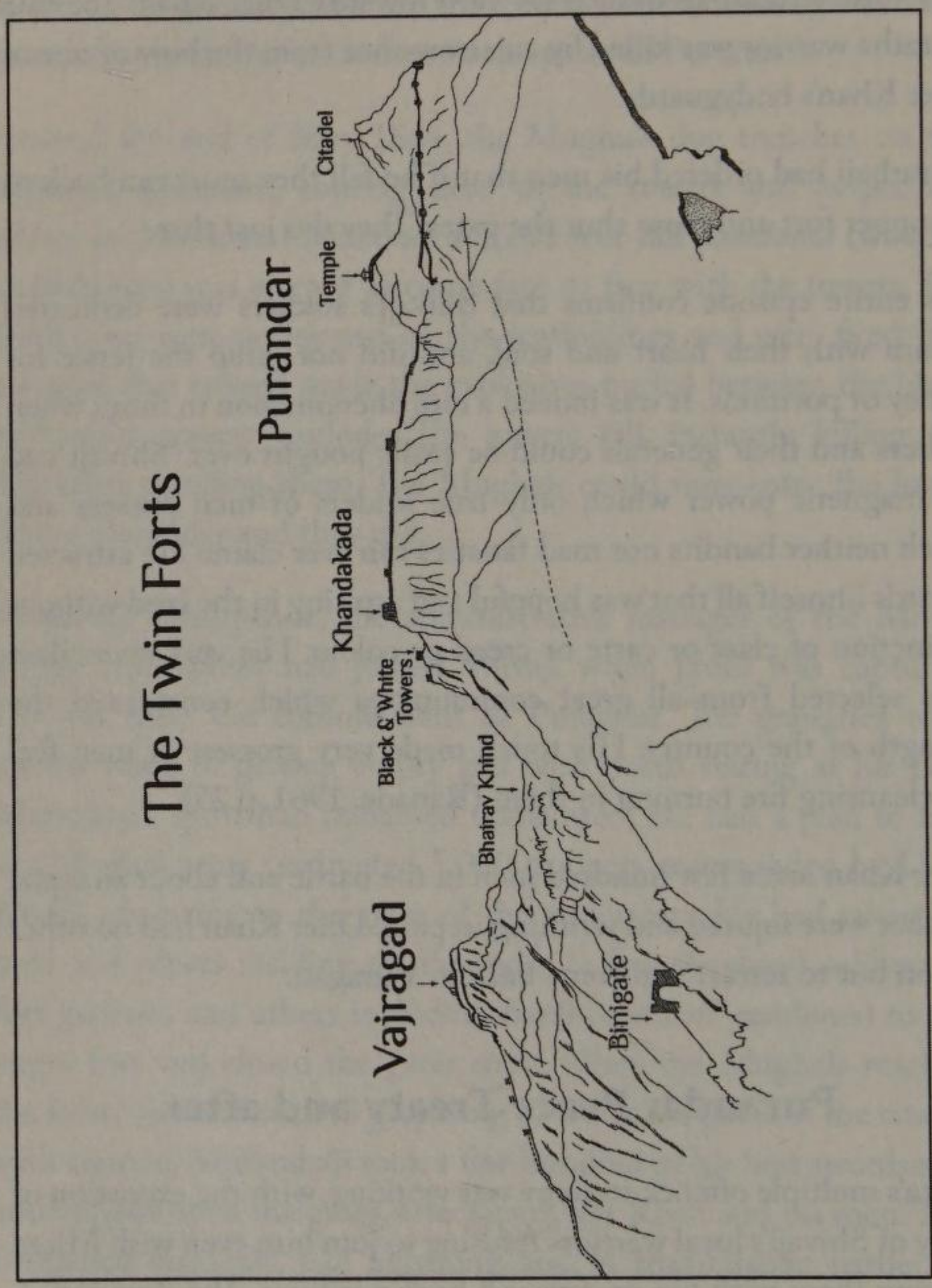


Fig. 9. The twin forts of Purandar and Vajragad and their vicinity

Fig. 10. The valorous Murarbaji

the helpless. He sent a letter to Mirza requesting negotiations but Mirza demanded total surrender.

11 June 1665 was a rainy day. Shivaji arrived in Mirza's camp near Saswad, unarmed and with just a few men. Shivaji had to turn this lowest point in his life into one of his finest moments of diplomacy. Here he was, dealing with the wisest Mughal war general, who was also a Hindu, to boot! Mirza resorted to a sure-fire pressure-tactic on the day of their meeting; he sent a message to Diler Khan to launch another attack on the gates of Purandar's upper fort.

Thirty-five-year-old Shivaji and sixty-year-old Mirza, both brilliant war strategists were meeting for the first time. Mirza's scribe and confidant Udayaraj Munshi and Shivaji's *vakeel* Raghunath were also present during the meeting. Mirza told Shivaji that they had managed to blast open the gates of the upper fort and the lives of those Marathas trapped there depended on the outcome of the meeting. Even with this pressure tactic, Shivaji refused to surrender completely and bargained hard, promising to help the Mughals as an independent agent to annex the Deccan Sultanates. He tactfully refused to be their mansabdar saying that he did not 'deserve' to be a Mughal mansabdar considering he had committed such 'crimes' like the midnight attack on Emperor Aurangzeb's maternal uncle Shaista Khan as well as plundering their financial capital Surat. He suggested his son's name (Sambhaji, who was just seven) for the post instead. After hours and days of hard negotiations – the negotiations went on for three days – finally a treaty was signed between Shivaji and Mirza. This has come to be known as the 'Purandar Peace Treaty'. The terms were:

- 23 out of 35 forts in the formal Nizamshahi territory (now in possession of Shivaji), along with the regions around them generating an annual revenue of 2 million rupees (400,000 *hons*) would go to the Mughals.

- The remaining 12 forts of the Nizamshahi with regions around them generating an annual revenue of 500,000 rupees (100,000 *hons*) would continue to remain with Shivaji (thus reducing Shivaji's income by 80%).

- Shivaji's son Sambhaji would serve the Mughals as a mansabdar – and his would be 5000 *dhat*/5000 *sawar*/5000 *du aspa sih aspa* post.

- Shivaji would remain free, however he was to help the Mughals in active military campaigns in the Deccan

To make sure that Shivaji adhered to all the commitments of the 'Purandar Peace Treaty' Mirza asked Shivaji to send his son Sambhaji to the Mughal camp till such time Shivaji handed over all the said forts to the Mughals. A seven-year-old Sambhaji was brought to Mirza's camp on 17 June and Mirza kept the boy in his tent for safety. Once the forts were handed over, the boy was sent back to Rajgad. 'Mirza was so pleased with himself that he paid Aurangzeb equal amount of tribute money that was spent on the Purandar Campaign' (Joshi, 1997, pp.41).

'To understand the full significance of this treaty we have to hark back to the Mughal Adilshahi Treaty of 1657. By its terms, the Adilshahi had agreed to cede all the Nizamshahi territory which had fallen to his (Adilshah) lot by the Mughal-Adilshahi Treaty of 1636. But just as the treaty of 1657 was concluded, Shah Jahan had fallen ill and, taking advantage of Aurangzeb's preoccupation with impending Mughal War of Succession, the Adilshah did not fulfill its terms. But he (Adilshah), too, was unable to retain all of it because, seizing the opportunity of the prevailing uncertainty, Shivaji had captured most of that old Nizamshahi territory. Naturally Aurangzeb felt himself cheated of the prize he had won in 1657 which he now wanted back. But Adilshah himself was unable to give it to him, for most of that territory was no longer

in his possession. So that was the territory, with its 35 forts, which Aurangzeb wanted Shivaji to surrender. After five years' war Shivaji had at last agreed to cede 23 out of these 35 forts and retained the remaining 12 *with the Emperor's consent*. Besides these, he (Shivaji) had many other forts such as, for instance, Pratapgad, Wasota, Vishalgad and Vijaydurg. But he had won these *out of Adilshahi territory*' (Mehendale, 2011, pp.314).

In August 1665, Emperor Aurangzeb called Prince Muazzam back from Aurangabad, thereby making Mirza officially the subhedar of Mughal occupied Deccan. The emperor also sent a gracious *farman* dated 5 September 1665 to Shivaji confirming the treaty. Several royal gifts like robes of honour (*Khilaat* and turban), and a jewelled dagger were presented to Shivaji. Mirza was promoted to the rank of 7000 *dhat*/7000 *sawar*/7000 *du aspa sih aspa*.

On 29 November 1665, Mirza and his colossal Mughal cavalcade started their journey towards Bijapur, for an invasion of the Adilshahi. The Maratha contingent, consisting of a light cavalry of 9,000 under Shivaji and Palkar were a part of this offensive. From Purandar to Mangalbira, a fort just 75 kilometres from Bijapur – the invading cavalcade moved without any interruption. On 24 December 1664, the Adilshahi cavalry of 12,000 horsemen attacked the cavalcade. However, Shivaji, Palkar and Diler Khan defeated them and Mirza's cavalcade carried on – oblivious to what awaited them at Bijapur.

On 29 December 1665, when the cavalcade was 15 kilometres away from Bijapur, Mirza realised what cunning military policy Ali Adil Shah had adopted. Known as *the scorched-earth-policy*, it involves starving the enemy and winning the battle without shedding any blood on the battlefield. Ali Adil Shah was determined to not let his beloved Bijapur fall in the hands of the enemy. All the wells outside Bijapur were filled with earth, the country was laid waste, all water reservoirs were drained out and all the fields were set on fire. The Mughal cavalcade would have to starve without food and water. The city walls, bastions and watchtowers were renovated by

raising the parapets higher. The cannon mounted on the ramparts had been serviced, their muzzles cleaned. Sacks full of coal powder and saltpetre had been stored in the watchtowers to make explosives. Water from the largest reservoir on the nearby Torvi hills had been emptied into the moat and a large number of crocodiles had been caught from the nearby rivers and brought in on carts to be put in the moat. All the nearby peasants were asked to bring their produce, cattle, fodder and provisions into the city. A strong infantry of 30,000 was guarding the ramparts all through the day and night.

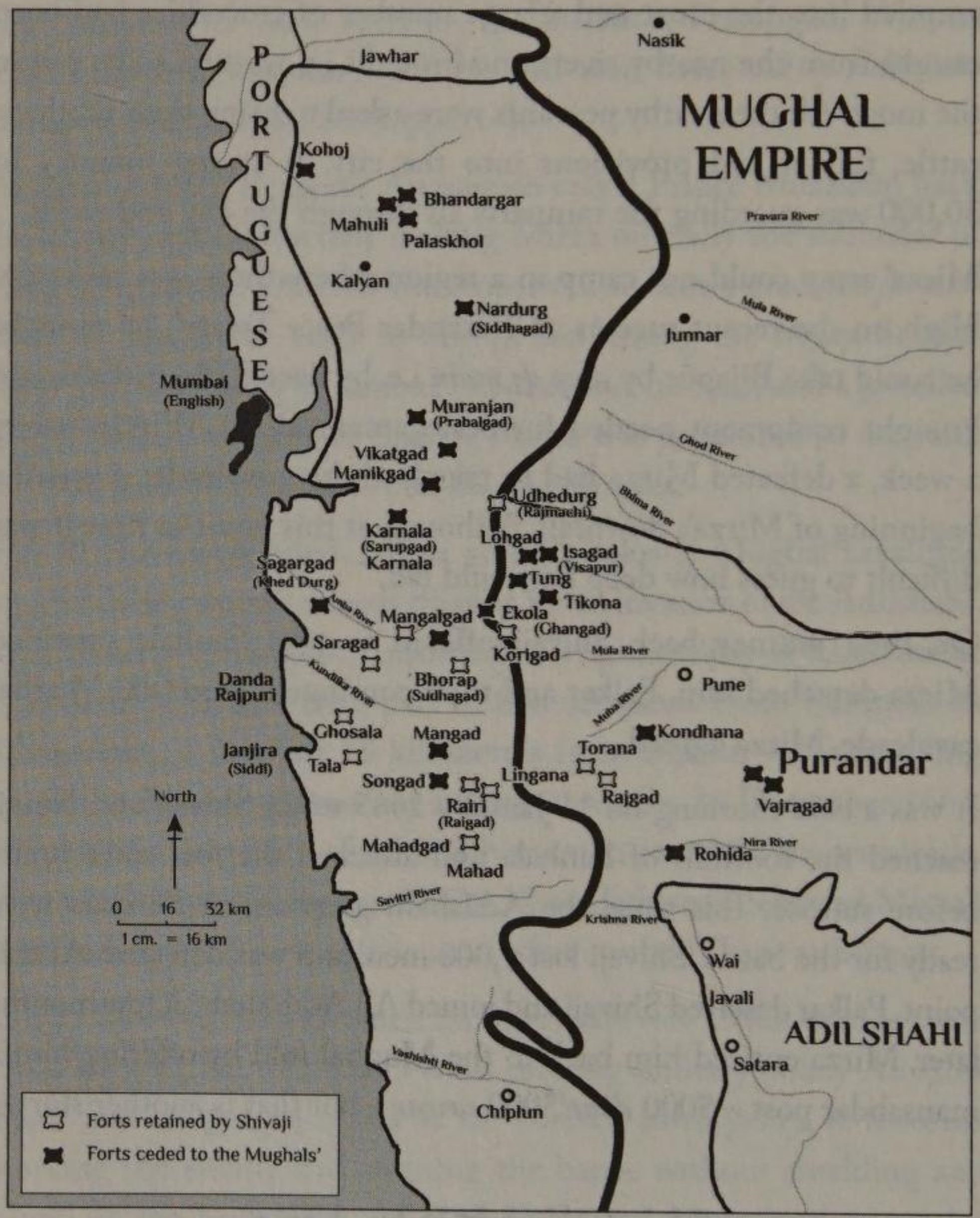
Mirza' army could not camp in a region where there was no water. High on the recent success of 'Purandar Peace Treaty', he thought he could take Bijapur by *coup de main* i.e. by deceit. He had also not brought equipment needed for besiegement along. Within barely a week, a defeated Mirza had to take back his cavalcade; it was the beginning of Mirza's downfall. Although at this point in time it was difficult to guess how deep he would fall.

On their journey back Shivaji offered to take Panhala provided Mirza detached him, Palkar and their contingent from the Mughal cavalcade. Mirza agreed.

It was a cold morning on 11 January 1665 when Shivaji and Netoji reached the foothills of Panhala and attacked the fort three hours before sunrise. This time, the Adilshahi garrisons at Panhala were ready for the battle. Shivaji lost 1,000 men, and was defeated. At this point, Palkar deserted Shivaji and joined Ali Adil Shah. A few months later, Mirza enticed him back to the Mughal fold by offering him a mansabdar post – 5000 *dhat*/5000 *sawar* – but that is another story.

Shivaji's visit to Agra

Shah Jahan – dethroned and disheartened – died a terribly lonely death on 22 January 1666. He was hurriedly buried in a grave next to his dear wife Mumtaj Mahal alias Anjuman Banu in the Taj Mahal. All the treasure and imperial paraphernalia of 1,400



Map 5. Division of forts according to the Purandar Peace Treaty

cartloads that were shifted from Agra to Delhi were brought back to Agra. Aurangzeb's 50th (lunar) birthday was on 12 May 1666 and this was his chance to display the Mughal treasures and hold a grand celebration to dazzle the vassal kings, and high-ranking mansabdars, especially the new recruits. Aurangzeb ordered Mirza to send Shivaji to the imperial court, even ready to bear the expenses of Shivaji's journey. Mirza too was eager to send Shivaji away; he was anxious: '*What if like Palkar, Shivaji too joined the Adilshahi king?*' It was a difficult task for Mirza to convince Shivaji to go to Agra with his son, who was the Mughal mansabdar. Historians say that Mirza promised Shivaji the following: Alamgir (Aurangzeb) would help Shivaji tackle the Siddis of Janjira and might consider appointing Shivaji as the subhedar of the Mughal occupied Deccan. The Deccan charge was so heavy that mere generals had so often wasted imperial resources that the Emperor himself thought of going there. Mirza may well have argued that the emperor after personally meeting Shivaji and seeing his ability would appoint him as the viceroy (subhedar) of the Deccan to achieve his southern conquests and save himself the trouble (Sarkar, 1948, pp.103).

Shivaji might have given it a thought – if he became the Mughal subhedar of the Deccan, two significant things would happen: there would be peace for a while in his region torn apart by years of war and he could use the Mughal army. 'If at that point of time, Shivaji had become the Mughal subhedar of the Deccan, he would have been a Mughal representative and had got the opportunity to lead the Mughal campaigns against the Shia sultanates of the Deccan, with money, weapons and reinforcements provided by the Mughals. This would have established Shivaji's reign on the region south of the Narmada River. Later, a powerful Shivaji could have revolted against the Mughal and taken a complete charge of the Deccan!' (Joshi, 2016, p.54).

Before Shivaji decided to visit him in Agra, Aurangzeb had written several letters (Sarkar and Sinh, 1963, pp.22) to Shivaji[37] (dated 25 December 1665): '*Whereas I have learnt from the dispatches of Mirza that you are, at the head of good force, firmly engaged in my service and have exerted yourself in the conquest of the Adilshahi strongholds and punishing them by taking over the Tal Konkan (North of Nizamshahi Konkan) – Therefore I graciously praise you and send you a robe of honour and a bejewelled dagger along with this* farman.'

Whatever it may be, Shivaji did agree to go to Agra with his son Sambhaji. Another letter dated 5 April 1666 says: '*The letter which you addressed to me reporting your having started, by the advice of Mirza Raja for saluting the threshold of my court has been placed before me. It has become the cause of increasing my favours towards you. Come here without delay, in full confidence in my grace and perfect composure of mind. After you have obtained audience with me you will be glorified with my royal favours and given permission to return home. I am herewith sending you a splendid* khilat *as a mark of honour.*'

However, what Shivaji did before going to Agra was a masterstroke of his foresight. He knew in the depths of his heart that anything might happen at Agra, given Aurangzeb's deceitful nature. There was a possibility that the Emperor might even arrest him and demand the surrender of his remaining forts. Shivaji visited all his remaining forts (making surprise visits to some) and made all the commandants independent entities. He made sure that the revenue and military administration would carry on if he were to be imprisoned or killed. He also told them they need not obey any orders coming from Agra when he was there because there was a possibility of Aurangzeb imprisoning and torturing him

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[37] A set of letters discovered in Jaipur state archives in 1939, belonging to Mirza Raja Jai Singh's son, Kumar Ram Singh was the most important discovery as far as Shivaji's stay in Agra was concerned. The letters give us the earliest and a most authentic report of the Shivaji-Aurangzeb meeting in Agra fort that ultimately intercepted the destiny of Indian history.

for ordering his fort-commandants to surrender the forts. In his absence, his mother Jija Bai would be his regent with Moro Pingle as Peshwa, (the Prime Minister) and Niloji Sondev as Majumdar (Treasurer).

On 5 March 1666, along with a few trustworthy men and military escorts, estimated number (350 or 400) Shivaji left for Agra with his son Sambhaji who was about eight now. Some of the people who went to Agra with Shivaji were Raghunath (the *vakeel* who dealt with Morey in Javali), Niraji Raoji (scholar-of- law who later became Shivaji's Chief Justice), Trimbak Dabir (Sonoji Dabir's son), Yesaji Kank, Tanaji Malusare (childhood friends, now an important part of Shivaji's army), Sambhaji Kaoji, Jiva Mahalya (his personal guard who was with him during the Afzal Khan meeting), Prataprao Gujar (who later became the Sarnaubat), Bahirji Naik (the Chief of Shivaji's spy network), Hiroji Farzad (Shivaji's cousin), and Balaji Avaji (Shivaji's scribe) to name a few.

Shivaji and his cavalcade arrived at Aurangabad. Saf Shikan Khan, the governor of the city sent his nephew to receive Shivaji, thinking that was enough to welcome a mere jagirdar. Shivaji was highly offended and asserted his status by riding straight to the place he was to reside in, as the citizens watched the cavalcade of the handsome Maratha and his striking son. The procession had 2-3 caparisoned elephants and decorated cavalrymen. Finally the governor had to come and visit him. This incident clearly shows how 'proud' Shivaji was. The question was – how would this self-respecting Maratha warrior face what was in store for him at Agra.

Braving the summer, Shivaji's cavalcade travelled across forests, deserts and ravines (see map) reaching the outskirts of Agra on 11 May 1666. The scorching summer was at its peak. On the way, Shivaji received many encouraging letters from Aurangzeb. Never seen before 'events' were to happen at Agra. 'The historic visit of Shivaji's to Agra began as a comedy of errors due to Rajput

incompetence. But as a sinister policy of Aurangzeb's dark heart developed, the political drama took on the lurid colours of a tragedy of human sin and divine retribution. Shivaji came out of it with complete success, achieved with most unimaginable means' (Sarkar, 1948, pp.107).

Mirza's older son Ram Singh must have been Shivaji's age, about thirty-five, when Shivaji visited Agra. He was Shivaji's official caretaker, a job he did not take seriously, at least in the beginning. The following events take place on 11 and 12 May 1666 at Agra, leading to confusion and then chaos, and then misunderstanding that led to courtroom drama that ended in something one could have hardly imagined.

Istiqbal or a grand welcome to Shivaji did not take place. This was a Mughal custom, practiced to welcome a high-ranking mansabdar at a day's distance. A person of equal status would travel for a day and welcome the guest and personally conduct him to the capital. Mirza's son Ram Singh was given the responsibility but he was busy with some other duties at the palace and sent a clerk instead. The clerk too reached late.

Shivaji and his procession reached Mulukchand's *sarai* (guest house) on the outskirts of Agra late on 11 May 1666. Ram Singh did not come to see him on that day and instead sent Giridhar Lal, a *munshi* (accountant or secretary) to Shivaji with a special robe and a horse as a gift. Shivaji gave Giridhar 200 rupees as *baksheesh*.

Shivaji had come with a rather small contingent, but with great splendour and equipment. A large elephant walked before him, carrying his flag. An advanced guard of troopers also preceded him. The horses had gold and silver trappings. The Deccan infantry too marched before him. He had two female elephants with *howdahs* following him. A palanquin with a dome-shaped roof with poles covered with silver plates and its tassels with large silver knobs went before his palanquin, which in fact was covered with silver plates.

His procession went about Agra with great care and pomp (Sarkar and Sinh, 1963, pp.30)[38].

On 12 May, Shivaji and his procession started for the birthday ceremony and yet, Ram Singh had not shown up. He met Shivaji halfway through and without getting down from his horse embraced Shivaji. Shivaji's procession had several elephants, which were sent back to Ram Singh's home to tether in his backyard. By this time it was late morning and the summer-sun was unbearable to someone not used to the northern heat.

Since it was Aurangzeb's birthday, betel leaves were being distributed to princes and nobles. When they reached Agra palace, half the ceremony was over (like weighing Aurangzeb alongside gold and precious stones and then distributing the wealth among the poor). Aurangzeb and his noblemen had shifted from *diwan-e-aam* (audience hall for common people) to *diwan-e-khas* (audience hall for select people)[39].

Shivaji and his son Sambhaji were taken near Aurangzeb's throne – Shivaji's proprietary gifts and alms (1,000 *mohurs* – gold coins – and 2,000 rupees as *nazar* and 5,000 rupees as *nisar* or proprietary alms) were placed before the throne. Sambhaji also offered 500 *mohurs*, 1,000 rupees as *nazar* and 2,000 rupees as *nisar*.

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38 This information is in Letter no. 21 dated 29 May 1666 and is written by Palakdas to Kalyandas Diwan.

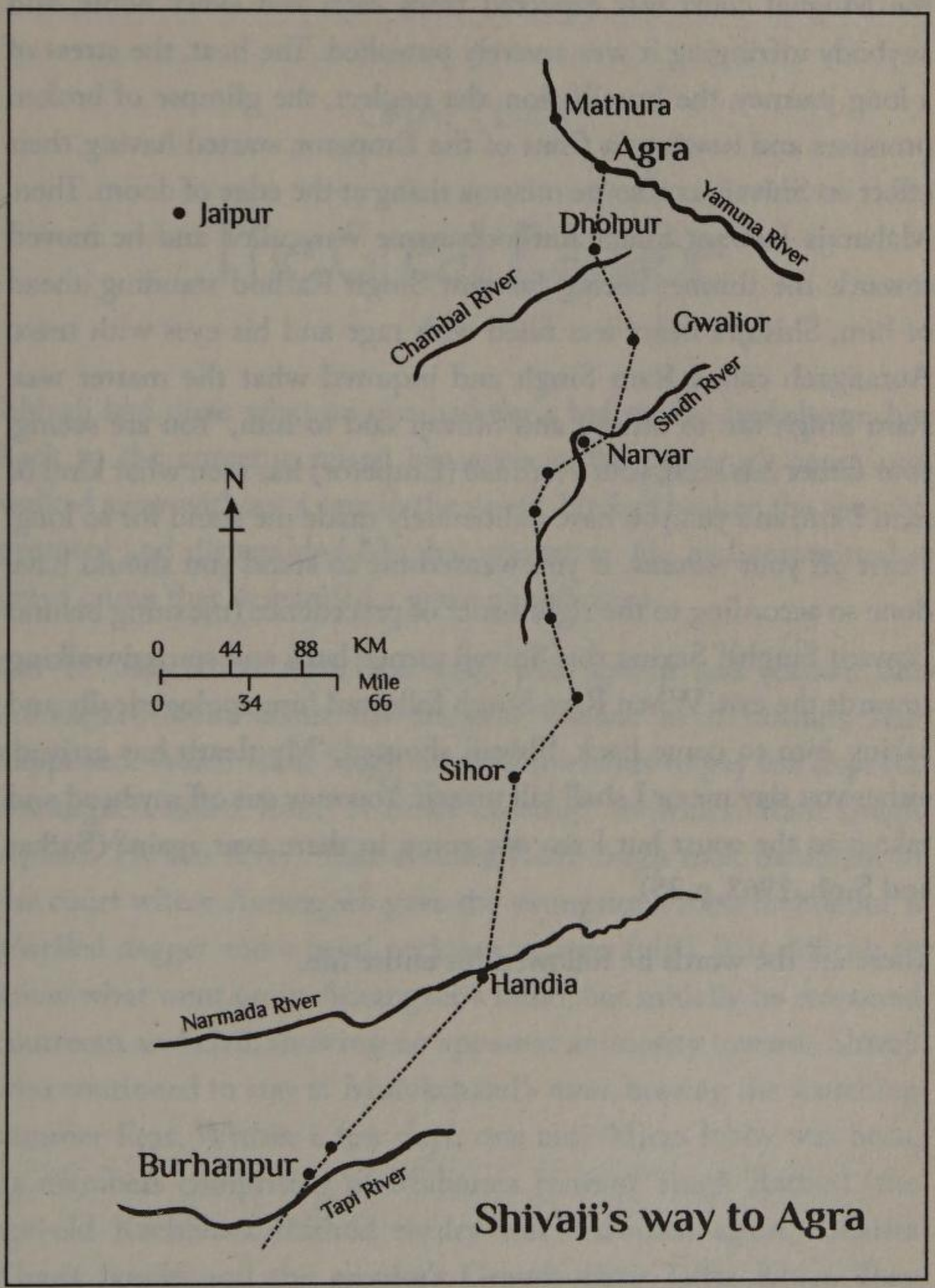
39 The greater part of public business of the Mughal government was carried out in the *diwan-e-aam* and it can be called the Court of Commoners, as it was open to all. It was a court of justice, an executive council, and a legislature and defence council all rolled in to one. Here, representatives of the independent rulers and agents of high dignitaries were granted audience by the Emperor. On assumption of office, on transfer, and while passing through the capital, all important persons were expected to take royal permission to attend it. The Emperor intermittently reviewed the troops stationed at the capital and inspected the stores and workshops. Aurangzeb made some changes – a public court was held in the forenoon and a court for a selected audience in the afternoon in the *diwan-e-khas*.

Shivaji, probably suffering from heat exhaustion watched the massive court in astonishment: the chandeliers were lit with numerous candles, rows of distinguished looking men stood in front of the golden throne with a marble base rising high like a heavenly sanctum floating in the air, and Aurangzeb sitting in that citadel of power – bejewelled, bedecked, and counting beads. There was more: behind the throne were benches of gold, where crown-weapons like jewelled swords, daggers, shields and spears were displayed. Bearers holding huge symbols of authority (prerogative of the Mughal Emperor; made of gold and silver) like the throne (*awrang*), the umbrella (*chatr*) and the fan (*sayaban)*, the globes (*kawakaba*), the flags and standards (*alam*), and the emblem of the sun (*Shamsah*), stood near the throne.

Shivaji might have expected a big welcome but, Aurangzeb did not even look at him let alone a smile or an acknowledgement, which was common in the court. Shivaji was led back and made to stand behind mansabdars holding 5000 *dhat*/5000 *sawars*. One of them was Maharaja Jaswant Singh Rathod.

The court proceedings started – mansabdars were called one by one and presented to the emperor, some did *kurnish*, some kneeled, some just prostrated and some, to the amazement of Shivaji wanted to kiss the Emperor's feet! Some gifts that could not be brought into the court were just announced, like Arab and Persian horses with saddles of silver, elephants with chains of gold and silver, housings of velvet and brocade, gold and silver, pearls and jewels, and invaluable rubies and garnets. Robes-of-honour, chairs of gold and silver, vases and vessels of gold and silver, luxurious dresses of Europe, Turkey and China and other precious things were shown. Similar presents were also offered to the Aurangzeb's four sons Muazzam, Azam, Akbar and Kambaksh; Mohammad Sultan was in Gwalior prison.

It is difficult to speculate if Shivaji was briefed about Mughal Court Etiquette. Rules and regulations of appearance in the imperial



Map 6. The route Shivaji took to get to Agra in 1666

court at the capital or in the mobile encampment were elaborately laid down. Strict adherence to a code formulation of conduct in the Mughal court was expected from each and every noble, and anybody infringing it was severely punished. The heat, the stress of a long journey, the humiliation, the neglect, the glimpse of broken promises and bowing in front of the Emperor, started having their effect on Shivaji, as if some miasma rising at the edge of doom. Then, Maharaja Jaswant Singh Rathod's name was called and he moved towards the throne. Seeing Jaswant Singh Rathod standing ahead of him, Shivaji's heart was filled with rage and his eyes with tears. Aurangzeb called Ram Singh and inquired what the matter was. Ram Singh ran to Shivaji and Shivaji said to him, 'You are seeing, your father has seen, your *Padishah* (Emperor) has seen what kind of man I am, and yet, you have deliberately made me stand for so long. I cast off your *mansab*. If you wanted me to stand you should have done so according to the right order of precedence (meaning behind Jaswant Singh)!' Saying this Shivaji turned back and started walking towards the exit. When Ram Singh followed him apologetically and asking him to come back, Shivaji shouted, 'My death has arrived, either you slay me or I shall kill myself. You may cut off my head and take it to the court but I am not going in there ever again!' (Sarkar and Sinh, 1963, p.25).

These are the words he followed his entire life.

CHAPTER 9

The Great Escape

Shivaji had done what no one had done before. He had shown his back to the emperor, raised his voice in the emperor's court and walked away without a care in the world. He had broken the age-old protocol and disregarded Mughal etiquettes. He had committed a grave crime that demanded a grave punishment.

On 13 May 1666 Agra was agog with gossip and scandal but Aurangzeb went about his emperor routine as if nothing had happened. When Ram Singh went to the court to pay his respects, Aurangzeb asked him, 'Is Sewa coming?' to which Ram Singh replied, 'He has fever'. That evening Ram Singh took Sambhaji to the court where Aurangzeb gave the youngster a robe-of-honour, a jewelled dagger and a pearl necklace as *inam* (gift). It is difficult to know what went on in Aurangzeb's mind, but initially he remained courteous and civil, showing no apparent animosity towards Shivaji who continued to stay at Mulukchand's *sarai*, braving the scorching summer heat. Within a few days, one anti-Mirza lobby was born, its members comprising of Maharaja Jaswant Singh Rathod (the age-old Kachhawa Rathod rivalry was rekindled again), Shaista Khan's family and the empire's Grand *Wazir* Jaffar Khan. They asked and insisted, 'Who is this Shiva to commit such criminal and audacious acts in your court?' This lowly jagirdar, an infidel was setting a dangerous precedent. If he goes unpunished all the

other Hindu landholders might rebel and raise their swords against the empire. He ought to be severely punished.'Aurangzeb's eldest sibling, princess Jahanara[40], also spoke to her brother. She said, 'This man has plundered Surat, misbehaved with Shaista Khan; he needs to be punished.'

At Agra they even gossiped about how Shivaji looked and admired him. On sight, Shivaji's body looked lean and short. He was wonderfully fair in complexion, and without knowing who he was, one did instinctively feel that he was a ruler of men. His spirit and manliness were apparent. There is certain energy about him, and he wore a beard. His son, a nine-year-old Sambhaji is described as very marvellously handsome in appearance and fair in complexion (Sarkar and Sinh, 1963, pp.30).

Meanwhile, Aurangzeb commanded Kotwal Fulad Khan, the police chief of Agra to deploy all the guards and besiege Mulukchand's *sarai* to keep Shivaji under house arrest. He also summoned Rad Andaz Khan, who was in charge of Agra Fort. Rad Andaz was known for his remorseless brutality and extreme fanaticism. He had built vaults under his palace meant for torturing and murdering whomsoever the Emperor wanted to get agonised and make them disappear. He had become Aurangzeb's favourite means of elimination. News spread about Aurangzeb's meeting with Rad Andaz and Ram Singh was most perturbed – he very well knew that if Shivaji was harmed his father's prestige would go downhill, even in the Deccan; the Marathas

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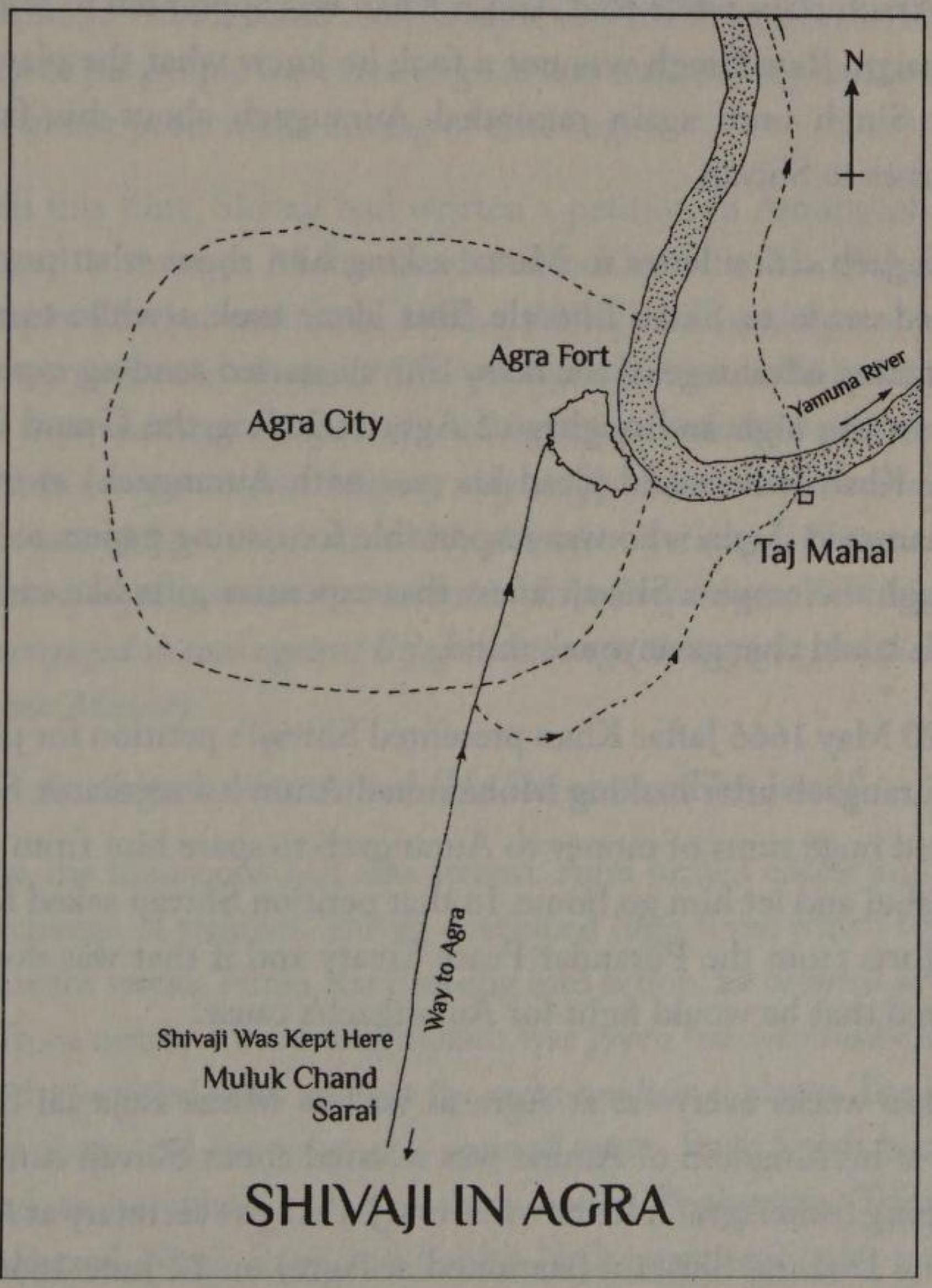
40 Princess Jahanara, also known as Padishah Begum, was her father's favourite child. She was a scholar of languages and theology and she also had architectural talents – she helped design Delhi's Chandni Chowk during the construction of Shahjanabad.
Jahanara was also a living victim of Aurangzeb's massacre of his family. Dara Shukoh was her favourite brother and she had helped him with his literary pursuits as well. When Shivaji visited Agra, Jahanara must have been about 52 years old. There is also a possibility that Jahanara might have expressed her disgust regarding Shivaji's behavior in the court to please her brother but had secretly helped Shivaji escape.

would revolt and might even eliminate his father. A disheartened Ram Singh went to Mohammd Amin Khan's (Mir Jumla's son who was now the Mir Bakshi or the paymaster general of the Empire) house and said earnestly, 'the Emperor has decided to slay Shivaji, but he has come here under a guarantee of safety from my father. So it is proper that the Emperor should first kill me, summon my son and kill him too and only after that put Shivaji to death' (Sarkar and Sinh, 1963, pp.28).



Map 7. Understanding Agra's geography with reference to Agra Fort and Mulukchand's sarai

The Mir Bakshi promptly conveyed Ram Singh's sentiments to Aurangzeb who cleverly put forth a condition: 'Ask if he (Ram Singh) stands surety for Sewa. If he escapes or does any mischief Ram Singh will be held responsible.'

Ram Singh signed a security bond.

Thereafter, Aurangzeb promptly passed an order that Ram Singh must go with Shivaji to Afghanistan to check the rebellious Yusufzai and Afridi clans while Rad Andaz Khan was appointed to lead this campaign. Ram Singh was not a fool; he knew what the plan was. Ram Singh once again reminded Aurangzeb about his father's promises to Shivaji.

Aurangzeb sent a letter to Mirza, asking him about what promises he had made to Shiva Bhosale. This letter took a while to reach, and taking advantage of the delay Shivaji started sending expensive gifts to the high and mighty of Agra including the Grand *Wazir* Jaffar Khan (who could plead his case with Aurangzeb) as well as Mohammad Amin who was responsible for issuing papers to travel through the empire. Shivaji knew that expensive gifts like cash and jewels could change anyone's mind.

On 20 May 1666 Jaffar Khan presented Shivaji's petition for pardon to Aurangzeb after making Mohammad Amin his mediator. Shivaji offered huge sums of money to Aurangzeb to spare him from going to Kabul and let him go home. In that petition Shivaji asked for the lost forts from the Purandar Peace Treaty and if that was done, he assured that he would fight for Aurangzeb's cause.

Within weeks everyone at Agra as well as Mirza Raja Jai Singh's staff at his kingdom of Ambar was worried about Shivaji cunningly escaping from Agra. A letter written to Jai Singh's secretary at Ambar by one Dhanraj Shriram (stationed at Agra) on 12 June 1666 says, '*Your order to take precautions not to let Shivaji go in case he escapes and*

takes the route via Maujabad Paragana is received. Strict warnings are sent to all villages in Maujabad Paragana immediately' (Mehendale, 2011, p.331).

However, all that Aurangzeb did (and could) do was to tighten the security around Shivaji. Ram Singh, who had signed the bond for Shivaji took permission to keep his own trusted Rajputs at inner checkposts, just in case Fulad Khan and his men tried to murder Shivaji. Shivaji had become a virtual prisoner – he was confined to Mulukchand's *sarai* (some records say it was Mirza's palace at Agra). The rest of his people were free to go in and out but they had to cross several check posts while exiting or entering.

Around this time, Shivaji had written a petition to Aurangzeb and submitted it through Mohammad Amin Khan the Mir Bakshi of the empire (Sarkar and Sinh, 1963, p.32): '*If your majesty restores to me all my forts taken by you I shall pay you two crores (20 million) of rupees. Give me leave to depart, I shall leave my son here in your service, I shall take every oath your Majesty may ask for. I have come here in firm faith in your Majesty's promises. My devotion is strong. Whenever you plan a campaign, summon me and I shall attend before you. Your Majesty is now engaged in war against Bijapur, let me go there, fight and die, thus serve your Majesty.*'

To that Aurangzeb commented, 'He has gone off his head!'

By now, the monsoons had also arrived. Agra turned cooler and due to the change of weather, Shivaji developed high fever, which was to continue for weeks. Niraji Raoji swung into action; he ordered several herbs from nearby forests. Raghunath was given the responsibility to search the wooded areas and get the right medicinal plants. The fever did not abate and the prognosis seemed grave. Ram Singh became attached to Sambhaji and took him home. Raghunath, Trimbak, Hiroji Farzad, Niraji Raoji and Bahirji Naik must have been around Shivaji.

On Friday, 7 June 1666, Shivaji sent away most of his men (except the above mentioned ones) saying, 'Go away (from the *sarai*). I shall stay here alone, and let me be killed if they want to kill me' (*ibid.*, p.35). Ram Singh invited all the Marathas to live in the garden surrounding his palace.

Soon thereafter Shivaji requested Aurangzeb through a letter to let the majority of his people go home and if the Emperor could organise for their exit papers. This wish was granted promptly by Aurangzeb who asked Mohammad Amin to issue the necessary travel papers. In the middle of June 1666 most of the people who had come with Shivaji left for the Deccan. The possibility of Bahirji Naik's spies entering Agra in various disguises cannot be ruled out.

Shivaji also requested that since he was about to die, Ram Singh must not be held responsible if anything were to happen to him; the Emperor must kindly cancel the security bond signed by Ram Singh. Even this wish was granted. Thereafter, Aurangzeb sent a message through Ram Singh that if Shivaji thought he was dying why didn't he hand over the remaining forts? If Shivaji did that Aurangzeb would allow his son to return home after Shivaji's death.

After receiving this message Shivaji said to Ram Singh, 'Your father gave Aurangzeb 23 of my forts and got the rich *paragana* of Tonk in Rajasthan as *jagir*. For the rest of my forts what are you getting from the Emperor? Tell your Emperor that I have no control over the commandants of my fort. Please tell your Emperor that I am sick, and my death-wish is to become a monk and stay at Varanasi. To this Aurangzeb replied sardonically, 'Let him turn a monk and stay at Prayag instead; subhedar Bahadur Khan will take care of his death-wish'. Bahadur Khan was known for his murderous nature, far worse than Rad Andaz Khan. Shivaji then had a change of heart

and asked for one last favour – he asked for 66,000 rupees on loan for charity and requested that Ram Singh must be released from the bond that he'd signed.

Shivaji's loan application for 66,000 rupees was approved by Aurangzeb after Shivaji signed the papers of Hundi[41]. The demand draft was quickly sent to Mirza Raja Jai Singh to en-cash it from Shivaji's men who would take the money out from Shivaji's personal wealth. Shivaji started his charity by sending fruits, dry-fruits and sweetmeats to Brahmins, religious mendicants and homeless beggars as alms, and ministers, courtiers and besieging police, including Fulad Khan as gifts. Merchants brought the stuff to *serai*, which was then packed in massive baskets. Each basket, slung on a pole, carried by two bearers, was custom checked at least at three different checkposts by Fulad Khan's men.

Meanwhile, Fulad Khan checked on Shivaji on an hourly basis. He would find his ward lying down on bed, looking gaunt and wasted. Sometimes, Shivaji would cover his face with a sheet, and Fulad Khan would just see his hand on which Shivaji always wore a gold bracelet. After a few weeks that hand with a bracelet was the (only) surety that Shivaji was laying on the bed. Sambhaji stayed on with Ram Singh and visited his father frequently.

On 22 July 1666, a ceremony took place at the *sarai*. Coincidentally, it was on a day when Aurangzeb had gone on a hunting expedition. On that day, Shivaji gifted two of his elephants (one male and one female), his palanquin, 1,000 rupees in cash and a *saropa* (dress)

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41 A *Hundi* is a financial document used in olden times in India for use in trade and credit transactions. *Hundis* were (and even now) used as a form of remittance instrument to transfer money from place to place, as a form of credit instrument or IOU to borrow money and as a bill of exchange in trade transactions.

to Kavindra Paramanand, who had come to visit Shivaji in Agra[42]. There was a feast and in all probability even Fulad Khan and some of his important men were invited to eat. A few Brahmins must have been invited as well. After this date, Shivaji's health seemed to have deteriorated even further and he was always seen sleeping on the bed.

From 13 August 1666, the watch over Shivaji was made even more stringent. Aurangzeb wanted to go on a hunting expedition for three days, and so he had given orders to Fulad Khan that Shivaji must be shifted to Rad Andaz Khan's palace soon. On 17 August, when Fulad Khan entered Shivaji's room to check in on his ward, it was empty. Aurangzeb got the astonishing news on 18 August. We can only imagine what Aurangzeb must have gone through. Someone had outwitted him – cunning, clever, and a very cautious Emperor, the king of deceit. This was the same man who had easily eliminated his brothers Dara Shukoh as well as Murad Baksh and had driven Shah Shuja whose army had reached Varanasi and beyond into the forests of Assam and into the arms of cannibals.

Aurangzeb was livid and enraged, he was also humiliated. Within days, the entire imperial machinery was activated. *Farmans* were dispatched to the subhedars of 22 Mughal provinces, and also to thousands of mansabdars from the regions between Agra and Aurangabad. About 50,000 Mughal cavalrymen combed the area

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42 From historical records, it is also clear that Kavindra Paramanand, an old acquaintance was with Shivaji in Agra in the month of July. In the years to come, Kavindra Paramanand Govind Newaskar wrote Shivaji's biography, *Shri Shivbharat*, in Sanskrit, by Shivaij's orders. This book is regarded as very authentic study material for the history of Shivaji. He had come to visit Shivaji in Agra from Varanasi. Originally from a village called Newase near Ahmednagar in Maharashtra, his intellectual aptitude had taken him several miles northeast, to a *gurukul* (residential school for scholarly studies) in the holy city of Varanasi. Sanskrit teachers at the learning centre not only taught him the basics of Hinduism but also helped him get rid of the peels of ignorance that had shrouded his thoughts. This riddance allowed him to explore *adhyatma*, the knowledge of the 'self'. He wrote Shivaji's biography in verse.

between Agra and Varanasi, raiding temples, *sarais*, mosques, *dargahs*, Hindu schools, cremation grounds, burial grounds and even *madrasas*. Hundreds and thousands of mendicants, ascetics, *swamis*, priests, *fakirs* and *pirs* were arrested, flogged, and imprisoned. A contingent of Rajput soldiers was sent to search the regions between the Narmada and Tapi rivers. Every group – Hindu or Muslim – with a small boy was taken into custody, kept under watch for a few days before they were let go. They found Paramanand somewhere in Rajasthan along with the elephants and the palanquins gifted to him by Shivaji. The palanquins were empty and Paramanand feigned ignorance. What he was doing in Rajasthan was a mystery. On the other hand, Ram Singh was put under house arrest.

The escape analysis

Aurangzeb wrote a scathing letter to Mirza (dated 20 August 1666): *You had sent Shivaji to us with great efforts, but your son Ram Singh betrayed us. We wanted to punish your son, sack him and parade him through Agra as a criminal but because of your loyalty to us we have granted him his life. Thank your God that your son has got away with a small punishment!* (Khare, 1934-61).

The most popular conclusion is that Shivaji and his son escaped by hiding in one of the sweetmeat baskets. Shivaji had learnt that he was to be moved to Rad Andaz Khan's palace on 18 August, so he took his son, hurriedly sat in a fruit basket and escaped on 17 August 1666. They got out of the basket when the bearers reached a small village some distance away from Agra, where some of Shivaji's men waited with horses. From there Shivaji travelled to Mathura, some 45 kilometres northwest of Agra, left Sambhaji with relatives of Moro Pingle (it was dangerous to take the boy along) and headed home travelling through Mathura, Allahabad, Varanasi, Gaya, Gondwana, Hyderabad, and Bijapur and reached Rajgad on

12 September 1666. Shivaji declared that his son Sambhaji had died on the way (so that the search parties did not look for him). On 22 November Sambhaji was safely brought back to Rajgad with a tonsured head – disguised as a Brahmin boy.

Dr Ajit Joshi (2016, pp.1-3), however, challenges this theory with rational explanations in his book 'Escape from Agra': Shivaji was too cautious to jeopardise his son's and his life, and hence using a basket to escape was highly dangerous. The baskets were checked at various checkpoints and Fulad Khan was a strict officer. There was no need to put Sambhaji in the basket as Sambhaji was allowed to go in and out of the *sarai* and most of the time Sambhaji was at Ram Singh's house.

A person sitting in a basket would be at his vulnerable best. If caught, the guards would have slaughtered Shivaji. It was not practical to hold/carry a sword (generally about 4 feet long) in a sweetmeat box/basket. Considering Shivaji left Mathura on 19 or 20 August, and reached Rajgad on 12 September – first reaching Hyderabad (1,500 kilometres by road as of today) and then from Hyderabad to Rajgad, covering another 400 to 500 kilometres within 22 days. This means he had to cover about 2,000 kilometres within 22 days, which came to about 80 kilometres a day on horse every day. This seems highly impossible. A horse can travel up to 40-50 kilometres a day but the horse as well as the rider need to rest; they cannot do this super-task continuously for 22 days. Even if the horse was changed, the rider was the same. Moreover, it was not a straight and smooth path for horses to gallop non-stop. On Shivaji's way there were rivers, mountainous trails, and several checkposts. Considering Shivaji was dressed as an ascetic, he could not have ridden a horse for that would have raised suspicion.

According to Mehendale (2011, pp.338-339), 'he could not have traversed such a circuitous route. It would seem therefore that Shivaji left his son at Mathura and with a select band of his companions rode

by the shortest route as far as possible, always ahead of the Imperial messengers who were carrying orders to arrest him. In a straight line, Mathura is about 1,000 kilometres from Rajgad. If we add half as much to it for distance by road, Shivaji and his party would have travelled at an average rate of 60 kilometres per day to reach Rajgad in 25 days, a feat certainly very difficult but not impossible, especially for a man of Shivaji's resourcefulness and resolution. And he must have put his enforced sojourn to Agra to good use to make thorough preparations such as *dastaks* (forged or tampered), reliable guides, and spare horses and provisions positioned at suitable spots – for its accomplishment.'

But was it possible to have all these idealistic situations considering the reality? The straight line between Mathura and Pune has mountains and rivers as hurdles.

As per Dr Joshi's hypothesis, Shivaji must have escaped on 22 July during the small ceremony held at the *sarai* where he gave Paramanand the elephants and the palanquin. He must have sneaked out of the *sarai* dressed as a Brahmin, making Niraji Raoji sleep in his place as a sick person. According to Dr Joshi, there is no documentary evidence proving that Shivaji was *present* at Agra after 22 July. Meaning, there is no mention of Shivaji or his actions after his letter dated 22 July 1666 describing the rituals for Kavindra Paramanand until till 18 August, when it was discovered that Shivaji had disappeared.

Kavindra Paramanand left Agra on 22 July; he travelled to Fatehpur Sikri along with his elephants, palanquins, some Brahmins who had come with him from Varanasi and some who had come to see him off. They camped in a *sarai* some 30 kilometres away from Agra. From here some of the Brahmins went back to Agra. According to the Rajput letters, Kavindra Paramanand was captured at Dausa in Rajasthan along with a palanquin and elephants. He was released because the Mughals could not find anything suspicious. Why did

he go to Dausa from Fatehpur? Did he have anything to do with Shivaji's escape? We may never know.

Aurangzeb enraged

Aurangzeb did wonder how Shivaji managed to get the *dastak* papers (travel documents) to travel from Agra. He suspected Mohammad Amin but his paperwork seemed clear. The bird had flown without a trace! Aurangzeb's head must have spun with several thoughts. Was Shivaji ever sick or was he just pretending? How did he get the travel papers – would Mohammad Amin dare to be a traitor or was anyone from the royal family involved in this? Had Shivaji really fled in the fruit basket as it was rumoured? Did he sneak out during the Hindu rituals held on 22 July when Aurangzeb was away on a hunting expedition? Was someone impersonating him from 22 July until 17 August? Alas, these are questions that still don't have concrete answers.

In any case, what was important was that Shivaji reached Rajgad in September followed by Sambhaji who was brought back from Mathura in November 1666. An enraged Aurangzeb sent a *farman* to Mirza asking him to arrest Palkar who had entered the Mughal services as a mansabdar of 5000 *dhat*, and hand him over to Diler Khan. Palkar was sent to Agra as a captive and thrown in the dungeons. He later agreed to embrace Islam. After his circumcision and conversion he was presented with a robe-of-honour and jewel-studded daggers and a sword. His wives were brought from Maharashtra and they too were forced to embrace Islam. Palkar was re-named Mohammed Quli Khan and was sent to Kabul on a campaign. Aurangzeb recalled Mirza from the Deccan, and Aurangzeb's son Muazzam was once again given the *subhedari* of the Deccan.

At this point, around 1667-68 (Mirza was still alive in the beginning of 1667), the politico-military situation in the north of India was about to get dangerous. The Afghan tribes (especially Yusufzai) from

the mountains between India and Afghanistan had crossed the Indus and started plundering the regions, cutting off communications between Afghanistan and Punjab. This was disturbing news and Aurangzeb ordered garrisons scattered across Maharashtra to move to the empire's northwestern borders. Under these circumstances Aurangzeb did not want to open offensives against Shivaji. In the Deccan, the Maratha forces under Mirza were showing signs of restlessness. After Mirza received news of Shivaji's escape he was quite perturbed and almost lost the logical part of his mind. He wrote a pathetic letter (Sarkar, 2007, pp.120) to Jaffar Khan: '*I have not failed, shall invite the wretched Shiva Bhosale to my camp on the pretext of marrying my son to his daughter (though his caste is much lower than mine – and I will not even eat food touched by his hands) and then dispose of the luckless fellow. Keep this plan secret and reply quickly.*' All that Aurangzeb did after knowing the contents of this foolish letter was that he called Mirza back, asking him to hand the Deccan charge over to his son prince Muazzam.

There were other things happing in the midst of this chaos. The Adilshahi forces had entered south Konkan in Shivaji's absence. Shivaji's first priority was to drive them out. A letter (Sardesasi, 2002, pp.868) dated sometime in September 1667 from the Portuguese Viceroy to the king of Portugal mentions: '*Shivaji is now our neighbour at Phonda – his cleverness, shrewdness, cunning, valour, agility and military foresight can be compared only with Caesar and Alexander.*' Shivaji's forces also attacked the Adilshahi and it was reported that the Maratha army was roaming the region of Gulbarga. Shivaji was also trying to renew the Peace Treaty with the Mughals. He sent diplomatic letters to Jaffar Khan for the release of Trimbak Dabir and Raghunath who were caught by the Mughal forces; they were duly released.

In the Deccan, a humiliated Mirza handed over the charge to Prince Muazzam at Aurangabad and left for Burhanpur. During the journey, a highly diabetic Mirza hurt himself and developed wound

complications. He breathed his last at Burhanpur on 28 August 1667. Some history books imply that he was poisoned by his trusted clerk Undayaraj Munshi (by the Emperor's orders). Munshi fled after Mirza's death from Burhanpur and resurfaced at Agra – where he embraced Islam. Ram Singh was restored to Mughal services again and immediately afterwards he was sent to Bengal to fight the Assamese. He spent several years in those remote lands before he died in 1688.

Immediately after receiving news of Mirza's death, Shivaji sent a letter (Khare, 1934-61) to Aurangzeb: '*My welfare lies in the services of the Emperor – as I or anyone in the world cannot fight against the Mughal army. Even if you offer me or my son the post of a low-ranking* mansabadar, *we will accept it. Whatever I have and even my life belongs to the Emperor.*' Aurangzeb ignored this letter but Shivaji did not give up. With one stroke of fine military strategy, Mirza had reduced his *swaraj* and his military power. His country was injured and needed quantity and quality time for restoring its past strength.

Shivaji played another diplomatic game – he was aware that prince Muazzam stationed at Aurangabad as the Mughal subhedar of the Deccan was different from his father. Maharaja Jaswant Singh Rathod was one of Muazzam's favourite generals and was also at Aurangabad. Shivaji wrote (Sarkar, 2007, pp.126) to Jaswant: '*the Emperor has cast me off, otherwise I was intending to request for letting me have the responsibility to take Qandahar and protect the empire's northwestern borders. I fled from Agra because I was scared for my life. My patron Mirza Raja is dead, and if through your mediation I am pardoned I shall send my son Sambhaji to the esteemed prince Muazzam and help in whatever way possible.*'

'Jaswant Singh and Muazzam jumped at the offer and recommended Shivaji to the Emperor who accepted the proposal' (Sarkar, 1948, pp.126-127). On 27 October 1667 Sambhaji visited prince Muazzam as the Mughal mansabdar of 5000 *dhat*/5000 *sawar*. Sambhaji was

allowed to return the very next day. Aurangzeb conferred the title of 'Raja' on Shivaji and this 'glorious' news was conveyed to Shivaji by Prince Muazzam. It is interesting to note that Mirza had requested the same when he was alive but at that time Aurangzeb had refused. Sambhaji was now regarded as a mansabdar in the Mughal court. His contingent visited Aurangabad and it was led by Pratap Gujjar and sometimes camped at Aurangabad. The king of Adilshahi did not want to be left out. He ceded the land-fort of Solapur to the Mughals and made peace. During the next few years Shivaji lived peacefully as far as the Mughals were concerned. The English factory letters of the era describe him as very quiet and as a Mughal vassal, bound to do whatever prince Muzzam wished. Some even thought that Shivaji would soon disappear into oblivion and be forgotten. However, the events that happened in the following years were to prove that the interim truce was a superfluous one. The ever so suspicious Aurangzeb did not like the fact that his son Muazzam and Shivaji were getting close to each other. He saw their friendship as a potential threat to his throne. He wrote a letter to prince Muazzam to arrest Pratap Gujjar and Niraji Raoji (who were at that time in Aurangabad) and detach their contingent to dissolve into the Mughal army. But that did not happen, since the Marathas got wind of the Emperor's sinister design and fled.

CHAPTER 10

The Calm Before the Storm

It is a known fact that after Shivaji's escape from Agra he was keeping a low profile. Those few years, from 1666 to 1669 he must have concentrated on his existing military that would eventually grow into a proper Maratha army. After the Purandar Peace Treaty the number of his soldiers had dwindled. Left with only 12 forts, Shivaji had to rebuild his military all over again. Napoleaon Bonaparte has famously said that 'it is very difficult for a nation to create an army when it does not already have a body of officers and non-commissioned officers to serve as a core, and a system of military organization'. Mehendale (2011, p.385) writes, 'Shivaji had to begin from the scratch. He did not have an army like the one Alexander the Great had inherited from his father, nor a nation like the one upon which Napoleon built. And he created not only an army but, while doing so, created a nation as well.'

But all was not fair in war as far as Shivaji was concerned. When the armies of the empires and the sultanates treated women and children of the conquered lands as perks of war Shivaji had laid down strict rules for his soldiers. No one was allowed to harass peasants for either food or fodder. During the rainy season the army was stationed in cantonments. The commissariat officers were to provide houses for men and stables for horses, and keep sufficient grain, fodder and medicines in stock. The army was employed on some expedition after celebrating the Dusserah

festival. Then an inventory of the belongings of all men ready to march out was made. For eight months these forces were to subsist on provisions obtained in the territories of the enemy. Women and children were not to be captured anywhere. Cows were not to be captured, but bullocks could be requisitioned for transport services. Brahmans, Mullahs and Church priests not to be molested nor were they to be admitted as sureties. On return from an expedition, an inventory of the loot from every soldier was to be made. All cash and articles over and above the salary due to soldiers were taken by the state. All officers were to present gold, jewels, valuable clothes and commodities to the Raja. Accounts were rendered to him, and sums due from the treasury for pay and other charges were to be taken by them. Men guilty of violating the rules or charged with cowardice, were to be tried by a military court and the offenders were to be duly punished.

Khafi Khan, a Mughal court historian, is conspicuous in his hatred of Shivaji. Even on the demise of this great warrior and conqueror (Shivaji), the historian made a chronogram of the date of his death by saying that 'the infidel went to hell.' Yet he pays a glowing tribute to this man. He writes, 'But he (Shivaji) made it a rule that whenever his followers went plundering, they should do no harm to Muslims, the Book of God, or any one's women. Whenever a copy of the Holy Quran came into his hands, he treated it with respect and gave it to some of his Mahomedan followers. When the women of any Hindu or Mahomedan were taken prisoners by his men and they had no friend to protect them, he watched over their liberty.' Further on, Khafi Khan remarks that 'he entirely abstained from other disgraceful acts, and was careful to maintain the honour of the women and children of Mahomedans when they fell into his hands. His injunctions upon this point were very strict, and anyone who disobeyed them received punishment' (Elliot & Dowson, 1877, pp.260-305).

Cosme De Garuda[43] says of Shivaji, 'Such was the good treatment he accorded to people and such was the honesty that none looked upon him without a feeling of love and affection. By his people he was exceedingly loved, both in matters of reward and punishment he was so impartial that while he lived he made no exception for any person, no merit was left unrewarded and no offence went unpunished. He did this with much care and attention, asking his officials to inform him in writing about the conduct of his soldiers, mentioning in particular who had distinguished themselves. Shivaji would offer them promotion either in rank or promotion at once. Shivaji prized the lives of his soldiers above all the interests in the world. He gave frequent audiences even to the most wretched and administered equal and impartial justice' (Sardesai, 2002, p.858).

The astonishing fact was that Shivaji's army had a rank system that bound all military personnel together as a team and that bond was known as the chain-of-command. This enabled the junior officers to know whom to look to for orders, guidance, and leadership. This was missing in the *mansabdari* system as well as the *jagirdari* system where each mansabdar was responsible for his troopers and he was the final authority and a chain-of-command was nonexistent. Shivaji's army had no tents, equipage, commissariat, or provisioning. As a consequence, the cavalry had high mobility. The cavalry was composed of 25% *siledars* – men who provided their own mounts and arms, and the rest *bargirs*, who were assigned (by the state) three horses for every two men. All his defence men were paid salary from Shivaji's treasury in *hons*[44].

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43 Cosme De Garuda, Portuguese and a staunch Roman Catholic, had published a biography of Shivaji's in 1730. He wrote the biography when he was in the Deccan and the book had become very popular among Portuguese oddicers.

44 Shivaji struck his own coins. One was a small copper coin known as Shivrai. Another was a *hon* made of gold. It had words – *Shri Raja Shiva* on one side and *Chhatra Pati* on the other side. It was about 1.3 centimetres in diameter and weighed about 2.8 grams.

Shivaji's Cavalry

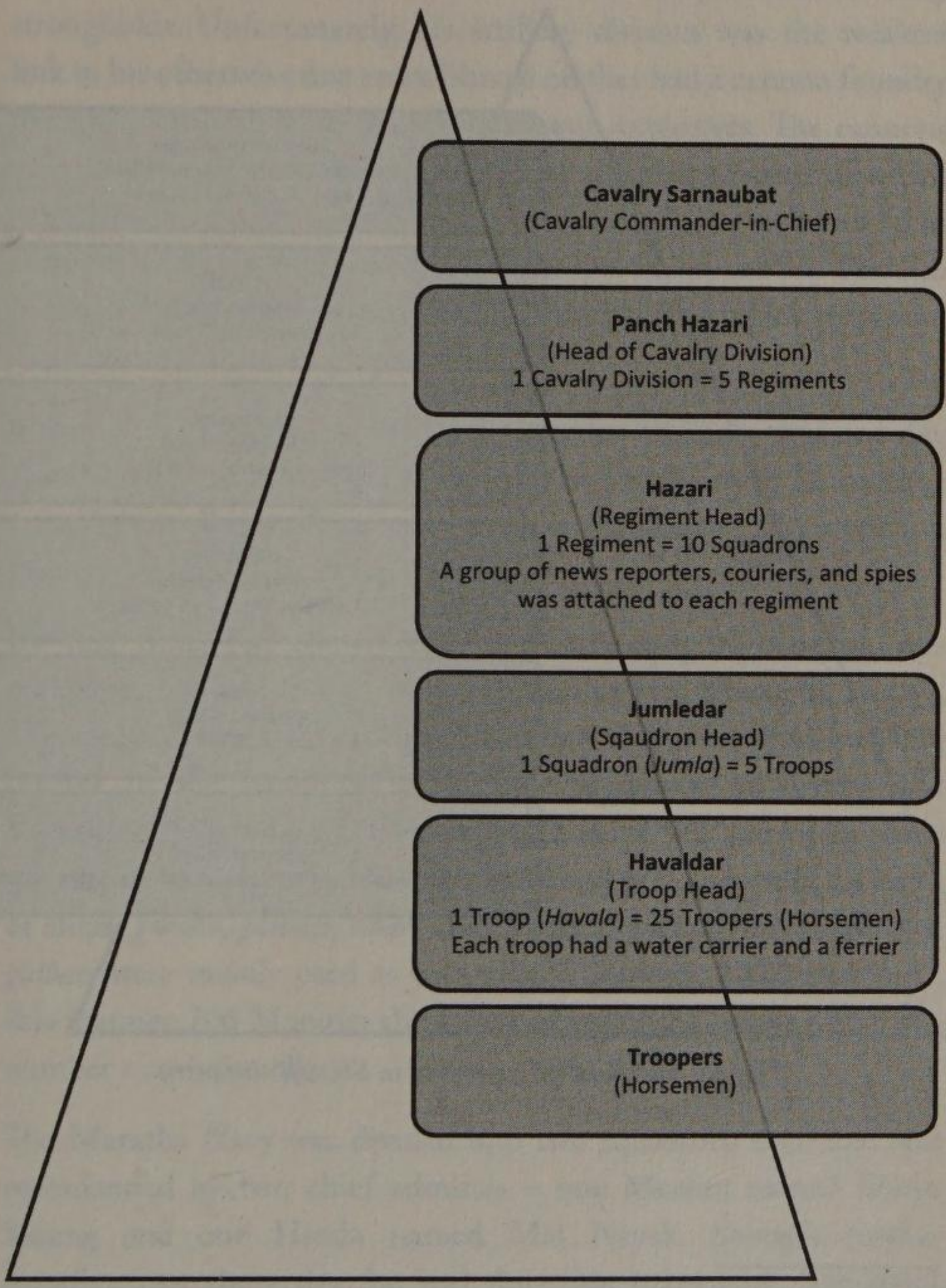

Fig. 11 The chain-of-command in Shivaji's cavalry

Shivaji's Infantry[45]

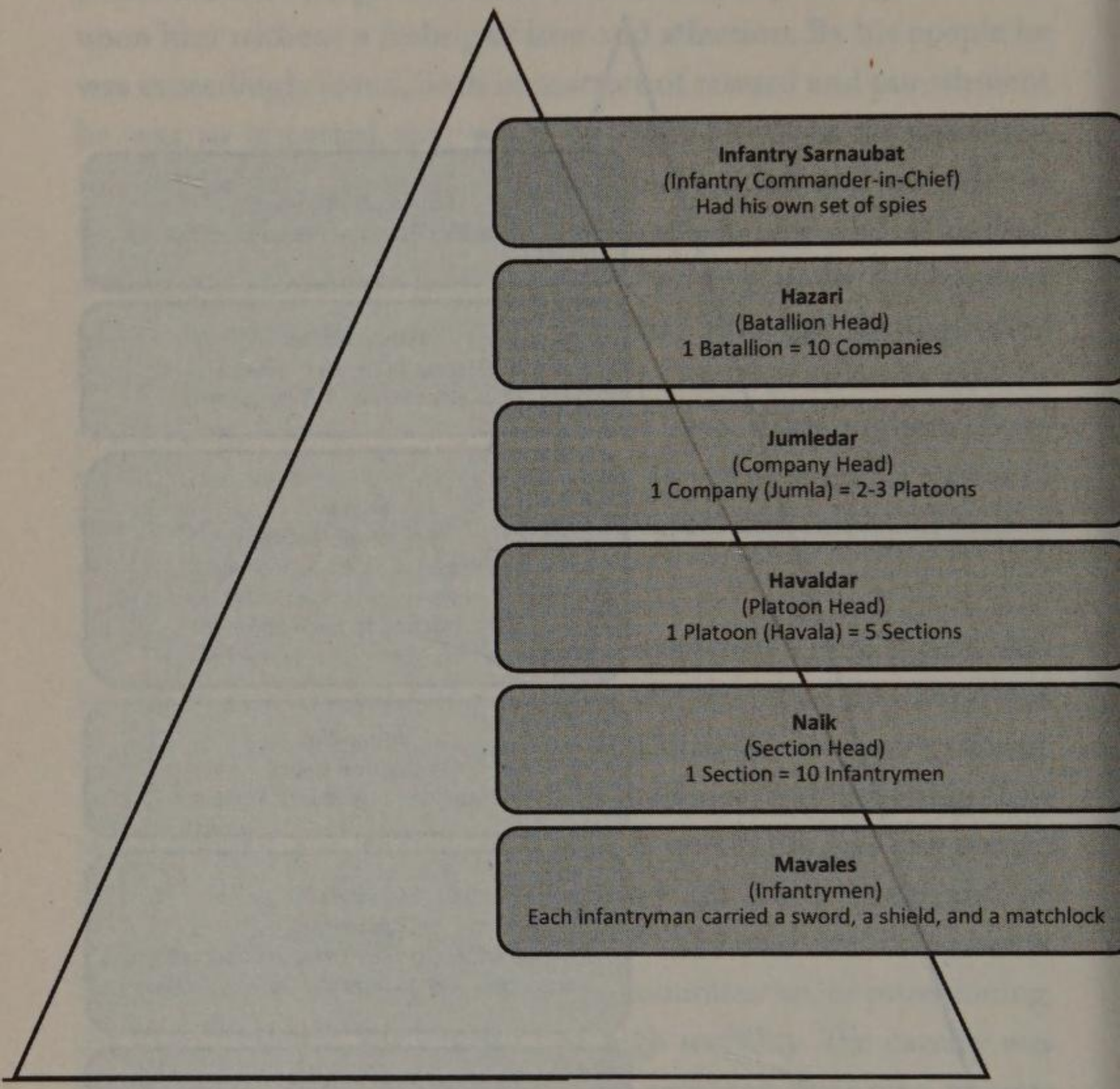

Fig. 12. The chain-of-command in Shivaji's infantry

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[45] Infantrymen were primarily from the Maval region, also called Mavales. 'Fryer (an Englishman) says: These hilly people are of a rougher temper, more hardy and less addicted to soft vanities of music, clothing, pomp and stateliness, being all naked, starving rascals; Shivaji's men thereby being fitter for any martial exploit, having been accustomed to fare hard, journey fast, and take little pleasure' (Mehendale, 2011, p.386).

As discussed in one of the earlier chapters, Shivaji's superb fort management had turned his forts into powerful military strongholds. Unfortunately, his artillery division was the weakest link in his otherwise fine army. Shivaji neither had a cannon foundry nor factories that made good quality gun explosives. The cannons he had were either won in land or fort conquests (some of which were laboriously transferred to his naval bases) or purchased from European traders who sold him what they found useless. He also purchased some guns cast in India in earlier times, which were very cumbersome 'museum pieces'.

Shivaji was definitely preparing for war, for he knew that one day Aurangzeb himself would descend on the Deccan with his massive army for an all out offensive to swallow the Deccan and make it a part of the Mughal Empire.

By this time, the construction of Sindhudurg in Konkan was complete. In the years to come, Thane, Kalyan, Bhivandi, Alibag, Vijaydurg, Bassein and Malvan became the chief ship-building centres of the Marathas with their dockyards at Alibag and Vijaydurg. Teak wood needed to build ships was grown in these regions. According to Sabhasad, Shivaji had primarily built six types of ships: *gurabs*, *galbats*, *sibars*, *tarades*, *tarus* and *pagars* (*gurabs* and *galbats* were mainly used as war-ships) (Sardesai, 2002, p.613). In this manner, 700 Maratha ships were at sea (although in reality the number may be smaller).

The Maratha Navy was divided into two squadrons each and was commanded by two chief admirals – one Muslim named Darya Sarang and one Hindu named Mai Nayak. Shivaji's further specifications show that he had done his homework. The naval squadrons were further divided into *Sarsubhas* containing five *gurabs* and fifteen *galbats*, each headed by an admiral. Shivaji had specified that the fast *gurabs* must not be too small or too large. Large *galbats* that only depend on wind to sail must not be built. All the ships

must be well-equipped with brave and trained fighters, guns, shot guns, matchlocks, ammunition, grenades and other material useful at sea. If the wind was not favourable (i.e. a rough sea) the fleet must be brought back under the protection of a sea fort irrespective of the cirmcumstances. Safety of the sailors must be above all. *Tarande* ships, mainly used by Kolis and merchants should be protected at all times to encourage fishing and trade. Efforts should be made to make foreign merchants feel assured so that they enter into commercial contracts with the Marathas.

Just as thousands and thousands of men and hill men from the Maval region (called Mavales) joined the Maratha infantry and cavalry, thousands of men from the Konkan lined up for recruitment in the Maratha navy. Fired by his dream of *Swaraj*, hardy sea men from different tribes came forward to push Shivaji's naval dream forward, especially the Kharva tribe, divided into Koli, Rajput (not the Rajputs from Rajasthan) and Muslim subdivisions that were known for their hardiest and most daring as well as skilful seamen. Other tribes – the Bhadelas and Vaghers were mostly Muslims. So overwhelmed were these men to have a king who met them frequently and one they could see with their own eyes and communicate with that they were ready to die for him at sea (Sardesai, 2002, pg. 624).

Why did Shivaji expand his kingdom on the western side of his *jagir*? Mehendale (2011, p.628) says, 'The first point to note in Shivaji's career is that he had a realistic grasp of the limitation of his means and wisdom to adjust to his ends accordingly. Thus he modified his ultimate aim of the liberation of India to a more immediate aim of the establishment of his authority in the Konkan, the narrow strip of land between the natural ramparts of Sahyadris and the sea.' The eastern parts were the plains of Sahyadri that might have been easy to conquer but difficult to keep. The strength of the Mughals and the Adilshahi lay in their well-mounted (armoured horsemen and horses) cavalry as well as artillery. They could fight winning battles

on the plains. Shivaji avoided capturing such places that he could not maintain, and instead he ventured into the Konkan. To fight in the Konkan, one needed agile infantry, light cavalry as well as a strong navy, and those were Shivaji's military strong points.

'Shivaji's greatness as a military leader has never been contested, but his greatness as a civil administrator is still more undoubted,' (Sen, 1925, p.17). When Nilopant Sondev was appointed to administer the country, he had written to Shivaji asking if the administration could be given to someone else for he could then go on military campaigns to capture other regions and forts. To that Shivaji replied, "To stay in the country for administration is also an important task!"'

The Mighty Enemy

Aurangzeb was a brilliant war strategist, a fearless warrior and he had an unblemished character in matters of women. He was a great poet and one of his poems (originally written in Persian) is amazing: '*Life changes, in a twinkle in a breath, now it was life and now it is death*!' He was perhaps the best among his brothers to become the next Mughal Emperor. His religious fanaticism, obsession with Sunni supremacy and intolerance took him down and drowned him into the dark abyss of our history. He could have been an Emperor with endless possibilities but he turned out to be an Emperor with endless tragedies.

India's tragedy was that Aurangzeb was the mighty representative of Islamic Jihadist who had tormented the country for centuries. Arun Shourie (2014, p.117) comments, 'the destruction (by the Islamic Jihadist) was not because of the lust for plunder or a determination to impose political hegemony alone. Their impulse was religious. Furthermore, Sita Ram Goel (*ibid.*, p.116) remarks, 'Starting with Al-Biladhruri who wrote in Arabic in the second half of the

19th century and coming down to Syed Mohammud Hasan, who wrote in English in the 4th decade of the 20th century, we have cited from the 80 histories spanning a period of more than 1,200 years. Our citations mention 61 kings, 63 military commanders and 14 Sufis who destroyed Hindu temples in 154 localities, big and small, spread from Khurasan in the west to Tripura in the east, Transoxiana in the north to Tamil Nadu in the south.'

If he was left unchecked he was surely to unleash terror and despair across India including the Deccan. Immediately after Shivaji's escape from Agra, Aurangzeb, on 13 October ordered the removal of the carved stone railing that his brother, the late Dara Shukoh had presented to Keshava Rai temple at Mathura (Sarkar, 1925, p.81). The great temple of Keshava Rai at Mathura was built by Bir Singh Deo Bundela during Jahangir's time at a cost of 3 million rupees and was one of the most magnificent temples ever built in India. Aurangzeb observed that 'In Islam it is improper even to look at a temple', and that it was totally unbecoming of a Muslim to 'act like Dara Shukoh'. This was just the beginning of Aurangzeb's fanaticism and was followed by the destruction of the famous Kalka temple in Delhi in September 1667. On 9 April 1669, a *fatwa* was issued for the demolition of temples and established schools of Hindus throughout the empire. Aurangzeb also banned public worship for the Hindus. The *Maasir-i-Alamgiri* records from Aurangzeb's 12th year regimen shows the following letter: '*The lord cherisher of Faith (Aurangzeb) learnt that in the province of Thatta, Multan and especially at Banaras, the Brahmin misbelievers taught from their fake books in their so called schools, their students, Hindus as well as Muslims came from far to learn from these erroneous men. His majesty, eager to establish Islam, issued orders to the subhedars of all provinces to demolish the schools and the temples and stop the teaching and the public practices of these vile infidels*' (*ibid.*).

In Ibn Askari's *Al-Tarikh* records, Emperor Aurangzeb offered benefits such as administrative posts in the empire, freedom to criminals from prison, settlements of disputes in favor, and honor

of imperial parade among other inducements for conversion. As a result, many notorious criminals must have joined the Islamic creed. Under Aurangzeb's rule, Muslims used to invent charges of disregarding Islam against Hindus and punish them, forcing them to embrace Islam (Khan, 2004, p.81). The Council of Surat recorded a similar strategy for conversion in 1668. When Muslims owed money to Hindu money-lenders (from the Bania community) but did not want to pay back, 'the Muhammadan would lodge a complaint to the *Kazi* (judge) that he had called the Prophet names or spoken badly of their religion, produce a false witness or two and the poor man was forced to a circumcision and made to embrace Islam' (Sharma, 2004, p.220).

In 1669, the temple of Vishwanath at Banaras was destroyed. It was and still is one of the most sacred towns in India and references to the worship of Shiva as Vishveshvara goes back to very early times. After the destruction of the temple on Aurangzeb's orders, a mosque (Gyanvapi Masjid) was built which still stands there. A portion of the sculpture of the demolished temple probably built in the late 16th century still survives to tell the fate of Aurangzeb's vandalism and barbarity (Sarkar, 1925, p.88). The present temple of Vishveshvara was built by Ahilya Bai Holkar of Indore. The temple of Somanath met the same fate (it has been built and re-built numerous times since it was first demolished by Mahmud of Ghazni).When Aurangzeb's men attacked the temple, "'stone breakers", writes Padmanabha in his classic work, "reached the apex of the temple and began to hammer stone idols on all sides, and the dislodged stones started raining. They loosened every joint of the temple building, its walls with sculptured elephants and horses carved on them by incessantly hitting with their sledge hammers. Then, amidst loud and offensive comments, they began to apply force from both the sides to uproot the massive idol by means of wooden beams and iron crowbars'" (Bhatnagar, 1991, p.94). Many more temples like the temple of Keshav Rai at Mathura, which

was built by Bir Singh Bundela at a cost of 3 million rupees, were demolished. A mosque was built at the same site.

Aurangzeb's religious persecutions were to continue for a long time. With his obsession with Sunni supremacy he slowly started losing control over his mansabdars who pushed the watandars to fleece the peasantry for maximum revenue. The torture led to a Jat rebellion around a village called Tilpat, (in present-day Haryana) under a chieftain named Gokla. On 12 May 1669, the Mughal *fauzdar* of Mathura was killed. Aurangzeb appointed Rad Andaz Khan to deal with the rebellion that had spread over a wider area. On 28 May 1669, Aurangzeb joined the battle where 300 rebels were killed and 250 men, women and children were captured. Gokla was taken as a prisoner and by Aurangzeb's orders, his limbs were hacked off one after another, in full view of the public; his sons and daughters were converted to Islam, and one daughter was married off to a Muslim servant. Everything was fair in religious war with Aurangzeb.

The brutal killing of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru is considered as a turning point in the history of the Sikhs. Guru Tegh Bahadur had travelled far and wide, spreading his message of equality and justice. In 1669 or so, he accompanied Ram Singh (Mirza Raja Jai Singh's son) to Assam where he had even participated in the Mughal campaigns. After returning from there he took his residence at Makhowal where in about 1675 he received a deputation of the Brahmins of Kashmir who narrated to him harrowing tales of their oppression and forcible conversion in Kashmir. Guru Tegh Bahadur, who had all along called upon others to fight against tyranny and injustice, and for freedom of ethics, now came out openly against Aurangzeb's policies and encouraged the resistance of the Hindus of Kashmir against forcible conversion to Islam, carrying out Guru Nanak's message that 'righteous people must defy and resist tyranny'. As expected, he was captured and

imprisoned in Delhi. Some say that he himself went to Aurangzeb to demand justice. In any case, after his capture, Aurangzeb demanded that he be converted, but he refused to embrace Islam. He and his companions were brought to Chandni Chowk where his companions were tortured to death in his presence to scare him, but he remained steadfast. On 11 November 1675 he was publicly beheaded. His martyrdom touched the soul of his son Gobind Singh and it is believed to be one of the main reasons for his founding of the Khalsa. Khalsa made every Sikh a potential warrior against oppression and religious persecution and led to the most dramatic change in the Sikh Panth.

Aurangzeb did not spare the Shia Muslims either, or even other liberal Muslims for that matter. There is an interesting story of a saint named Samrad. Born in Armenia to Jewish parents, Samrad had researched his ancestral religion and had become a Rabbi, thereafter going deep into the philosophy of Sufism and converting to Islam to become a Sufi. He translated sections of the Hebrew Bible into Farsi. He was disliked by the Mullahs for his free thinking but was liked and followed by thousands of liberals. He used to say that whosoever had realised God, God comes to him. The Mullahs believed that the Prophet went to the heavens but Sarmad opposed that, saying the heavens came down to the Prophet. Sarmad generally remained in the nude state and he had acquired knowledge of the highest non-dualism. When summoned to the court and asked to repeat the Kalima – '*La ilah ilallah*, meaning there is no god but Allah, and '*Mohammadur rasool ullah*' meaning Mohammad is his last messenger. Sarmad recited only the first half and refused to recite the second part. He said that the second part implied that Mohammad is the last *paigambar*. 'Last' signifies end of the road for any religion, including Islam, making it stagnant with no room to grow or change with emerging new worlds and no new messengers to show newer paths. Samrad was publicly beheaded by Aurangzeb's orders, also at Chandani Chawk in Delhi.

The Reprisals

Shivaji had understood Aurangzeb's fanaticism and knew the implications if Aurangzeb descended on the Deccan and established his rule. In the year 1670, Shivaji, out of the blue, opened an offensive against the Mughals. As said earlier, the Mughal army in the Deccan was reduced to reinforce the Mughal Empire's north-western frontiers. After his escape from Agra, Shivaji had spent a few years planning carefully, gathering all the recourses he had to train and organise his army. Prataprao Gujar was appointed as the Maratha Sarnaubat and Prataprao Gujar, Moro Pingle, Nilo Sondev, Raghunath, Yesaji Kank, Annaji Datto were some of Shivaji's prominent war generals.

In the same year (1670), Shivaji's second son Rajaram was born to his wife Soyara. Rajaram was 13 years younger than Shivaji's first son Sambhaji. However, there was little time to celebrate; Shivaji had to take back the lost forts but he lacked the manpower and the equipment for a long drawn out besiegement. Also, neither did he have the time nor the patience to engage his army into such time consuming war tactics. There was but one option: to scale the heights and attack the citadels of those invincible forts and capture them suddenly. The outcome of such daring was as unpredictable as it was risky. Shivaji's visit to Agra was a huge learning experience and he had understood the major weaknesses of the Mughals and their *mansabdari* system. The mansabdar owned his contingent and the central power, the Emperor, had no direct control over 200,000 cavalrymen and 50,000 infantrymen. It was also a melting pot with mansabdars who were Afghanis, Rajputs, Uzbeks, Abyssinians, Marathas, Punjabis, and so on.

Shivaji could not be scared of the optical illusion created by massive Mughal military cavalcades now. His first priority was to take back Kondana and Purandar – the forts that protected the core of his *swaraj*. The first in his list was Kondana, situated 20 kilometres southwest of Pune, 1,320 metres above the sea level and 700 metres

above the surrounding Sahyadri plateau. It was and still is the highest hill in Pune and its north and south sides are very steep, becoming almost vertical at the top, and creating 12 metre-high walls of black basalt. In those times, the fort was protected by high and strong walls with intermittent bastions, especially on the sides of the hill that were less steep. The approach to the fort was by two abrupt and torturous paths with broken, precarious steps carved out in the face of rock. The northeast path led to a fortified gate known as Pune gate and the one from the southeast led to Kalyan gate. The fort had only one weakness and that was a natural chasm that drained rainwater falling from the crest. This weakness offered a relative easy approach to the fort. From this side the fort was protected by a strong fortified wall. When Shivaji planned to capture it in 1670, it was manned by a Mughal fort commandant named Udaybhan Rathod and his 1,200 Rajputs.

It was the night between 4 and 5 February, 1670. We can imagine how the cold winds must have blown about the hill, which was three kilometres in circumference. Tanaji Malusare arrived with 500 men – all from the Maval region and expert mountain climbers – in the dark of the night and reached the foothills. Two of the Mavalas climbed the hill and threw rope ladders down for the others. A few hundred of them managed to climb up, having the advantage of a surprise. A hand to hand fight started between more than a thousand Rajputs and 300 Marathas. In the ensuing battle Tanaji and Udaybhan, both expert sword-fighters came face to face and were killed at each others' hands. The disheartened Mavalas wanted to flee but Tanaji's brother Suryaji and their maternal uncle Shelar *mama* shut the gates and made them fight. Finally, Kondana was captured by the Marathas.

With the demise of Tanaji Malusare, Shivaji lost a brave warrior and a childhood friend in that battle. It is said that at that time, a totally disheartened Shivaji said, 'I gained a fort but lost a lion!'

Aurangzeb was alarmed and several contingents from the north were ordered to go to the Deccan but before they could arrive, the Marathas struck again. Purandar was taken back on 8 March 1670. By May 1670, many of the forts lost in the Purandar Peace Treaty like Mahuli, Hindola, Lohagad, Karnala, and Rohida were taken back. Subsequently, 27 forts were recovered within four months.

At Mahuli, Shivaji led the attack, but the Mughal garrison was alert and the attack was thwarted. The Marathas suffered heavy casualties. Shivaji did not wait to lay siege and diverted his attention to the hill forts around Kalyan and Bhivandi, which had now been taken over by the Mughals. In the battle of Kalyan, Uzbeg Khan (also known as Kartalab Khan; famous for his defeat at Umberkind) was killed. Another Mughal mansabdar, Lodhi Khan, was also slain. Shivaji and his men continued with their lightning attacks. Daud Quereshi, who was appointed by Mirza Raja Jai Singh to attack villages and slay civilians, burn houses and enslave young women in Shivaji's terrain, came to Ahmednagar from Khandesh with a contingent of 7,000 horsemen. He went to Junnar and drove off the Marathas and returned to Ahmednagar. However, as soon as he was away the Marathas struck again.

Monsoon had arrived but Shivaji and his army carried on their work. That year, the English in Mumbai wrote a letter to their Surat counterparts dated 11 June 1670, '*Shivaji and his army are not idle like the Mughal army. He does not make hay while the sun shines. Even when the sun is covered with thick clouds and and there is heavy rain he carries on with his work. The Mughal army has taken shelter during the monsoons but Shivaji is carrying on*' (Anon., 1931, p.150).

Fort Mahuli was captured by Shivaji during this time.

While all this was happening on the Maratha front, some other drama was taking place on the Mughal front. Diler Khan, stationed at Nagpur (in present day Vidarbha, Maharashtra) and who had come to the Deccan with Mirza and had fought the

battle of Purandar was asked to go to Aurangabad along with his contingents and meet prince Muazzam, the subhedar of the Deccan. The problem was that Maharaja Jaswant Singh Rathod had become Muazzam's confidant and was at Aurangabad along with his Rajput contingents. Diler Khan was loyal to Aurangzeb but he hated Jaswant Singh and vice versa. Diler Khan was worried about his own safety and was reluctant to stay at Aurangabad. His reluctance was looked upon as a rebellion by Muazzam. Aurangzeb sent one Iftikar Khan to mediate but Iftikar played a double game – he told Muazzam that Diler Khan was an enemy and told Diler Khan that Muazzam was planning to imprison him. Diler Khan left for Delhi with his contingents and Muazzam's army chased him. Fed up of this farce, Aurangzeb ordered Muazzam to go back to Aurangabad, Jaswant was transferred to Burhanpur, and Diler Khan to Gujarat.

These events show that the Mughal army that was good at wars-of-expansion was not so good when put in a defensive position. The Emperor had not much control over his war generals and since the chain-of-command was missing, the war generals thought themselves as lord and masters of the situation and nobody wanted to obey anybody.

Shivaji once again shook the Mughal Empire. In October 1670, on the day of Lakshmi Puja (worshipping the goddess of wealth) during Diwali, Shivaji and his 15,000 cavalrymen attacked Surat again, burning down many houses. While the English and the Dutch protected their premises, Shivaji did not pursue the Europeans but went for low-hanging fruit – rich Hindu and Muslim traders. As per the imperial court newsletter, Shivaji took away 6.6 million rupees worth of gold and silver. As per Surat Council's letter dated 20 November 1670, Shivaji sent a letter to Surat's Mughal officials and some rich merchants before leaving, that if they did not pay him 1.2 million rupees as yearly tribute he would return the next year and burn down the remaining town (Sarkar, 2007, p.136).

The Mughals tried to intercept Shivaji while he was returning from Surat but were defeated and suffered heavy casualties. That was the beginning of Surat's misfortune and Mumbai's success. Mumbai, which was under the English, offered Hindu traders freedom from the *jiziyah* tax and the atrocities of Muslim *quzis*. Mumbai also offered them security from Shivaji's raids. Within a few years, Surat lost its position as the greatest emporium of India. Aurangzeb and Shivaji were equally responsible for this.

It is true that the two times the Maratha forces approached Surat, the authorities and the people were given ultimatums to send tributes to the invading army within a certain time, otherwise the city would be subjected to fire and sword. Even in the case of plunder of Karwar, Vengurla, and Hubli, such ultimatums are clearly mentioned. In some enemy territories Shivaji demanded a tax called *chauth*. It was collected from those territories which were not under his direct control. *Sardeshmukhi* was another tax that was 1/10 the standard revenue and was charged from the entire area. He made all efforts to reduce the miseries and pangs of warfare by wise regulations and by inviting the enemy subjects to accept his sovereignty or his protection by giving *chauth*. If these alternatives were not accepted by them, they were to undergo all the sufferings which war would justify to be inflicted upon them. By his frequent expeditions against Surat and other rich commercial towns, he showed the people of India that they were insecure and unprotected under Muslim rulers, and hence they should renounce their allegiance to them and accept his rule. Once they became his subjects, whether they were Hindus or Muslims, they enjoyed peace and security in his *swaraj*.

After the terrifying Surat raid, Shivaji and his war generals marched northwards and invaded the Mughal provinces of Vidarbha and Khandesh, regions that had not seen war in many years. The Maratha *bargirs* and *shiledars*, disciplined and trained to obey the orders of their superiors did exceedingly well in these raids. The tables were

turning; the Mughals who were always the aggressors were pushed into a defensive position. By the end of 1670, the Marathas had taken over the hill-forts of Markanda, Ravla, Javla in Baglana (on the way to Khandesh). The Maratha Sarnaubat Prataprao Gujar, advancing by rapid marches, led his contingents to the flourishing market-city of Karanja, a rich Mughal trading centre in Vidarbha near Khandesh. Some wealthy traders were kidnapped for ransom and knowing the Maratha army's respect for women, one escaped dressed as a woman. The Marathas carried away the spoils-of-war consisting of fine cloth, silver and gold to a value of more than 10 million rupees on 4,000 oxen and donkeys. Thereafter, the Maratha force of 20,000 troopers started plundering the region and collected revenue from the *watanadars* who promised them a quarter (*chauth*) of the yearly revenue in the future. Surprisingly, there was no resistance from the Mughals. Their governor (*sarkar*) who reported to prince Muazzam, the Mughal subhedar of the Deccan, was absent. His son Ahmed Khan was busy fighting petty battles with Maharaja Jaswant Singh Rathod who was stationed at Burhanpur in Khandesh as per the Emperor's orders after the showdown between Diler Khan and Jaswant. The Marathas continued unhindered and finally captured the fort of Salher early in 1671. The 20,000 Maratha cavalrymen (and some infantrymen) laid siege to Salher fort, which is the second highest fort (more than 1500 metres above the sea level) in Maharashtra. It has natural walls difficult to scale and the girth of the hill is more than four kilometres and the slopes are steep, and one night the Marathas scaled the fort with rope ladders and killed the Mughal fort commandant, Fathulla Khan.

By now, a totally frustrated Aurangzeb appointed Mahabat Khan as the Mughal war general of the Deccan. Mahabat was earlier stationed at the empire's north-western frontiers (present-day Kabul). He arrived at Aurangabad with a large cavalry on 10 January, 1671. He marched into the troubled regions of Baglan and tried to besiege the forts taken by the Marathas but the monsoon had already set in.

He hurried back to the safety of Ahmednagar and encamped with his vast cavalry. Here, he lived a lavish life with 400 dancing girls at his beck and call. A revolt in Afghanistan forced this fun-loving Mughal war-general to go back again to the empire's north-western frontiers. Aurangzeb appointed Bahadur Khan as the Mughal war-general in the Deccan. Bahadur was a high-ranking mansabdar (600 *dhat*/5000 *sawar*/5000 *du aspa sih aspa*). He was Aurangzeb's foster brother and had a distinguished military career.

There was more trouble at the empire's north-western borders too. Aimal Khan, the Afghan chief had struck coins in his own name and had declared a war against the Mughal Empire. The Khybar pass was closed. Mohammad Amin Khan, the Mughal subhedar of Kabul was in Peshawar and wanted to urgently go back to Kabul in the wake of the Afghan revolt. While returning to Kabul, he and his army were attacked by Afghan forces on 21 April 1672. Thousands of Mughal men perished, while many women and children were enslaved and sold to the slave traders of Central Asia. Aurangzeb hastily summoned prince Muazzam from the Deccan and officially met him on 24 July 1672. Muazzam and Mahabat Khan were given a large army and the responsibility to bring the situation in Kabul under control.

In June 1671, Bahadur Khan and Diler Khan planned a tight siege on Salher fort that was taken by the Marathas with an estimated 60,000 men. Later they handed over the charge to Ikhlas Khan and Amar Singh Chandawat. The Marathas attacked the siege from the outside in early 1672. The battle is explained in *Sabhasad Bakhar*: 'the Maratha Sarnaubat Prataprao Gujar galloped with his cavalry from the Deccan plateau while Moro Pingle and his infantry battalions arrived from the direction of Konkan (the Marathas fielded about 40,000 troopers). The region around the fort was hilly and bringing the cavalry force to the spot all of a sudden was rather difficult. Ikhlas Khan got the shock of his life, and the Mughal besiegement came alive with Afghans, Rajputs, Muslim and other mansabdars

along their contingents warding off the attacking Marathas. A hand to hand fight ensued, with the Mughals using gun carriages as obstacles. There was such a cloud of dust in the sky during the battle that visibility was nil over an area of about 45 square miles (117 square kilometres). More than 10,000 lives were lost and there was no count of the number of war animals, horses, elephants and camels killed. Men and animals waded through the slush of flesh and rivers of blood. In the end, the Marathas captured 6,000 horses as spoils-of-war, 125 elephants, 6,000 camels, and large quantities of cash, diamonds, gold and silver. Prataprao and Moro Pingle and 13 others were awarded for their valour and daring.'

Salher 'furnished Shivaji with an admirable base of operations against the rich Mughal provinces of Gujarat and Khandesh. It is only 125 km east-southeast of Surat, 50 km south-southwest of Nandurbar, 100 km west-southwest of Amalner, 250 km west-southwest of Burhanpur and 175 kilometres northwest of Aurangabad. All these places, the last two being the capitals of Khandesh and the Deccan respectively, now lay within striking distance of the Maratha cavalry. Also, a 150 km stretch of the Surat-Buhranpur route lay within 80 km of Salher' (Mehendale, 2011, p.431).

The important Mughal routes in the Deccan were now within the Marathas' reach. They could now wait and hide themselves till the very last moment of ambush.

Shivaji was creating history, and intercepting destiny. Never before had any other kingdom or empire brought or could bring the Mughals to their knees. The hunter was being hunted. With these victories, the Marathas blocked the Mughal entries into the Deccan. The Surat-Nasik-Junnar route and the Surat-Shrigonda routes were now within reachable distance of the Maratha cavalry. The loss of Salher made the Mughal southern frontiers too wide to control. At this point of time Aurangzeb must have felt totally lost. Suddenly there was a dearth of

multi-dimensional war generals in the Mughal army who could deal with Shivaji. There was no one who had the calibre of Mirza Raja Jai Singh who could control the Rajputs as well as Muslim mansabdars. Mughal mansabdars posted at Aurangabad, Buhranpur, Chandod, Ahmadabad, and many other places were jealous of each other. Prince Muazzam had played his own politics – keeping an eye on the future – by giving a free hand to most of the already unruly mansabdars. He would need their support during the war-of-succession between his brothers (Aurangzeb's four sons) in the future after his father's death. Most of the mansabdars (including Muazzam whenever he was at Aurangabad as the subhedar) lived in true Mughal style – with wine, women, lavish dinner parties, luxurious baths, hashish parties, Falcon flying and hunting expeditions.

'Shivaji was extending his kingdom and consolidating his gains. He administered the lands with justice, and did not allow religious persecutions. The Muslims and the Christians were as happy as the Hindus. In fact, he issued special orders to protect the rights of the Muslims and ensured that the land and cash grants to the mosques in his terrain were not discontinued. With revenue from the (relatively) rich Vidarbha coming into his treasury, he was in the position to pay his army regularly and his men were never in arrears of pay. When it came to paying the labourers, masons and carpenters that he employed in large numbers to build and restore the forts, to build ships and to renovate the ports, he was even more liberal. Often times, the English complained that they did not get enough workmen. The people loved working for Shivaji not only because they got adequate wages from him but they were also treated with respect' (Palsokar, 2003, p.195).

1671 to 1673

Shivaji's army invaded the extremely hilly regions of Jawhar and Ramnagar that lay between Kalyan in north Konkan and Nasik was

at the edge of south of Gujarat's coast. This campaign was led by Peshwa Moro Pingle. This part was ruled by men from the Koli community and was defended by their agile hill men. Moro Pingle succeeded and soon Jawhar and Ramnagar became a part of *swaraj*. The victory was not easy. It was a very invincible region with huge hills rising above the thickly wooded valleys. Some of those hills had fortresses build on the table for defence. Some rivers and rivulets flowing from the mountains to the Arabian Sea with frightening urgency could carry away even horses with their forceful waters. This proves that Shivaji's army could not only deal with the Mughal and the Adilshahi armies but also with the hill men of the region.

With the rise of the Marathas in the Deccan, a new movement was emerging throughout India. It was now clear that the Mughals were not that invincible and could be challenged as well as defeated. What Aurangzeb feared most had happened: Shivaji had inspired others to challenge the Mughal rule.

One Chhatrasal Bundela, son of Champatrai Bundela was the chieftain of Bundelkhand. He had initially helped Aurangzeb during the Mughal war-of-succession, but as the war progressed, Champatrai had declared himself as an independent chief. After Aurangzeb won the war and became the emperor, as per his orders, Champatrai Bundela was 'hunted down'. However, before he was caught, Champatrai and his wife stabbed themselves to death, thus celebrating independence at the cost of their lives. Chhatrasal Bundela was their fourth son and was only eleven when his parents had committed suicide for the sake of freedom. As there was no alternative, Chhatrasal had joined the Mughal military services and had come to the Deccan with Mirza Raja Jai Singh. Chhatrasal was just in his twenties when he offered to serve Shivaji in the war against Aurangzeb. Shivaji honoured him and advised him to wage his own war against Aurangzeb. In the years to come, Chhatrasal kept up a continuous war against the Mughals in Bundelkhand and earned great respect and followers. He became known for his independent

spirit, sense of honour, and finally he carved out an independent state with its capital at Panna. He passed away as a happy man at the ripe old age of 81 in 1731.

By this time the Mughal rule from Bundelkhand had been wiped out. He was the product of Shivaji's actions that spoke louder than many a claim. Chhatrasal played a major role in history later in his life when he tried to bring Aurangzeb's son Prince Akbar and Shivaji's son Raja Sambhaji together to fight against Aurangzeb. Meanwhile, Rustum-e-Zaman, the famous general of the Adilshahi who also secretly admired Shivaji all his life revolted against Ali Adil Shah. Shivaji helped Rustum plunder Raibag, a part of the Adilshahi kingdom but soon Rustum was lured to the Bijapur court and killed.

Many significant things happened in the Deccan in 1672. On 21 April, Abdullah Qutb Shah, the king of the Qutbshahi died and was succeeded by one of his sons-in-law, Tana Shah. One of Abdullah's daughters was married to Aurangzeb's son Mohammad Sultan who was languishing in Gwalior prison. On 24 November 1672, Ali Adil Shah passed away at the age of 32 and his five-year-old son Sikandar was declared as the new king. Immediately, the Bijapur court was totally submerged in internal strife. In the midst of this chaos, Shivaji soldiered ahead spending huge amounts of money in constructing new structures on his forts. About 50,000 *hons* (2.5 million rupees) were spent on Raigad fort alone. By this time Shivaji had moved base from Rajgad to Raigad in Javali. In the same year, Shivaji declared war against the Adilshahi. Around this time, he may have met Samarth Ramdas[46] who he held in high esteem. He laid the foundation of a sect possessing the zeal for victory. He not only promoted a distinctive system of worship by establishing the Ramdasi sect, but propagated a social outlook

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[46] Samarth Ramdas was born as Narayan Suryaji Thosar on the birth anniversary of Lord Ram in 1608, in a village called Jamb on the banks of River Godavari. Ramdas was a great poet and his *Dasbodh* is regarded as a bible of management even today.

towards life called 'Maharashtra *Dharma*', thereby creating a very favorable atmosphere for Shivaji. 'Maharashtra *Dharma*' contained six principles: 1) Aspiration for prosperity 2) Well-being of one's family 3) Enlightening the people 4) Physical strength through regular exercise 5) Activism (effort and struggle is god) 6) *Swaraj* and *Swadharma* (freedom and aptitude). 'Two of Shivaji's letters dated 22 July 1672 have survived which order the commanders of Mahipatgad and Sajjangad forts to let Ramdas reside there and also to look after him well. This privilege is not known to have been granted to any other person' (Mehendale, 1672, p.676).

In December 1672, Shivaji called Annaji Datto (his Brahmin treasurer) and Kondaji Farzand (cavalry chieftain), commanding them to take back Panhala fort that was under the Adilshahi control. This takeover is even more enthralling than the Kondana capture. Panhala had to be taken by surprise. Kondaji took just 60 men with him and on the night between 6 and 7 March 1973, they scaled the fort walls. Annaji Datto waited at the foothills with 1,500 infantry. Once inside the fort, Kondaji and his men blew the bugles they had carried with them, abruptly breaking the silence of the night, causing alarm and confusion. In that chaotic situation, some of them threw open the gates for Anna Datto and his infantry to march in. A fierce fight ensued, and the Adilshahi fort commandant fled fearing for his life. Panhala fell into Kondaji's hands. As per Shivaji's instructions, every corner of the fort was investigated and guards were appointed on the ramparts and every gate.

Khawas Khan, the Grand *Wazir* of the Adilshahi ordered Bahlul Khan, the Adilshahi's subhedar of Miraz and Panhala, to take back the fort. Bahlul Khan was the leader of the Afghan Pathans and a nobleman in Bijapur's court. When Bahlul and his contingents reached 45 kilometres west of Bijapur he drew his army into a layer protecting the encampment by gun-carriages and waited for reinforcements. The Maratha Sarnaubat, Prataprao Gujar and his cavalry intercepted them while they were camping. Prataprao

posted his men near the river that supplied water to Bahlul's camp, cutting off their water supply. It was the hot month of April and Bahlul and his Pathans started falling sick without water. Bahlul Khan surrendered and Prataprao let him go. Shivaji was not happy about Prataprao letting Bahlul go free since Bahlul was certain to strike back. From there Prataprao invaded the Kannada country and plundered Hubli.

On the Mughal front, in early 1674 the Marathas intercepted Bahadur Khan and Diler Khan who were trying to enter the Konkan. Bahadur Khan was the new Mughal subhedar of the Deccan and was now called Khan Jahan Bahadur. This new subhedar built an entrenched camp and a new fort on the banks of Bhima some 60 kilometres from the city of Ahmednagar. He named the fort Bahadurgad after himself. Shivaji and his men did not spare even the Mughal subhedar of the Deccan. They attacked the camp sometimes in August 1674 and carried away 200 fine horses and 10 million rupees. The Marathas also tried to burn down the camp.

On the Adilshahi front, Bahlul Khan, the Afghan warrior had got over his defeat at the hands of Prataprao. He once again marched towards Panhala, and Shivaji once again asked his Sarnaubat to intercept Bahlul. This time, unfortunately, Prataprao was killed in the battle.

However, Panhala still remained with the Marathas.

Consolidation

'Shivaji's operations against the Siddi's coastal fort of Danda Rajpuri were continued or resumed and, by 1671, the Siddi was reduced to such dire straits that a report was received at Goa from the Portuguese fleet of the North that Shivaji had laid siege to Danda Rajpuri by land and sea, continuously bombarding it, and that

there was a great danger that the fort would pass into his hands' (Mehendale, 2011, p.439).

As per orders from the higher ups sitting in Goa, the Portuguese chief of Chaul started helping the Siddis in whichever way he could and still, for the Siddis, the situation did not improve. As a last resort, the Siddis of Janjira acknowledged the Mughals as their overlord. Towards the end of 1672, Aurangzeb sent a fleet of 36 war ships from Surat to Danda Rajapuri to help the Siddis. The Mughal armada did destroy some of the Maratha merchant ships and even destroyed some of the ports. That was the year when Shivaji as well as Aurangzeb sought the help of the English naval power to outwit each other. Within a year, the Mughal fleet was back at Surat only to return in 1674. There was a fierce sea-battle between the Mughal admiral Sambhal and the Maratha admiral Daulat Khan. The Mughal fleet was driven away and the victory made Shivaji even more determined to take the Danda fort 'at any cost'.

The Siddis had no place to anchor their ships since Danda Rajapuri was surrounded by the Marathas. The Siddis thought of anchoring their fleet at Mumbai and make occasional attacks on Shivaji's terrain in Konkan. By this point, most of the Konkan was with Shivaji. The English (who controlled Mumbai) were reluctant to give shelter to the uncouth and rowdy Siddis but were pressurised by the Mughals and were left without any option. This turned out to be the main cause of conflict between the English and the Marathas. To challenge the English, Shivaji took over a small island called Khanderi[47] about 17 kilometres south of Mumbai harbour and 4 kilometres away from mainland Konkan.

Shivaji started building a fort on Khanderi (known as Henry Kenry by the English) in 1672 but it took a long time to complete. Meanwhile,

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47 Khanderi is a tiny island, only 2.5 kilometres long and a kilometer wide. It has two small hills. Khanderi also has a twin island called Underi just 2 kilometres to its east by north.

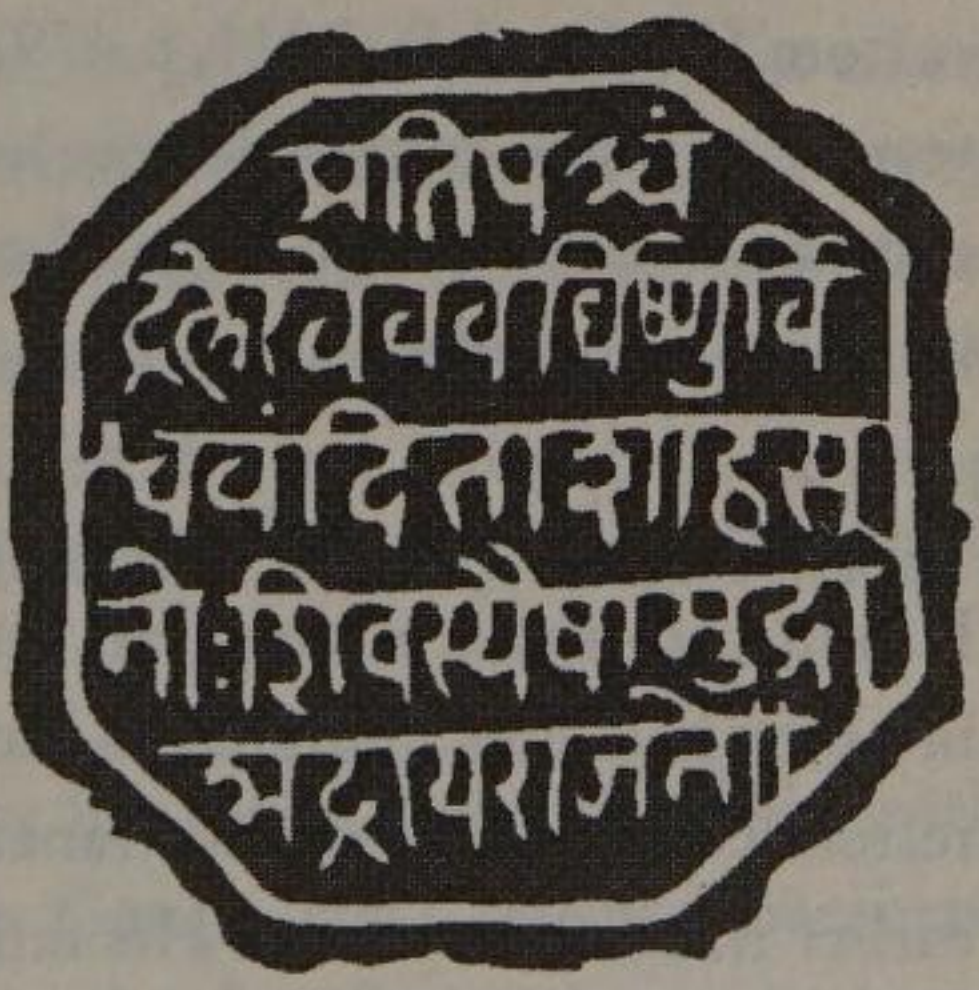
he had recovered his lost possessions like Pune, Kondana, Purandar, Lohgad, Karnala, Mahuli, and all the hill forts, big and small from Kalyan district. Khandesh, the bastion of the Mughals had agreeded to pay him *chauth*. The Mughal strongholds like Aundha, Pattah, and Salher forts were taken. In 1672, many chieftains in northern Konkan were forced to join him. The Marathas had also taken back Panhala, Satara, Parli, and other forts. The Maratha force was moving towards Karwar, Ankola and other places now.

Aurangzeb kept getting disturbing news from the Deccan but he was was reluctant to come down there because of the trouble at the empire's north-western borders. The Satnamis, a Hindu religious sect in Narol (in present day Gujarat) were revolting against the Mughal Empire. Aurangzeb sent Rad Andaz Khan with 10,000 cavalry to take care of the situation. Both sides lost a large number of men but the Satnamis were eliminated. Rad Andaz Khan was promoted to the rank of 3500 *dhat*/2000 *sawar*. Meanwhile, Muazzam and Mahabat Khan had failed to subdue the Afghan rebels and so Aurangzeb was forced to send Rad Andaz Khan with a huge cavalry. While this military cavalcade tried to force its way to Kabul through Karapa pass, it was attacked by the Afghan rebels. Rad Andaz Khan was killed in this battle.

CHAPTER 11

Becoming Chhatrapati

From the very beginning Shivaji had a seal saying, '*Like a crescent moon, grows the kingdom of Shivaji, son of Shahaji, always seeking the welfare of the people.*' His seal[48] showed his ambition and in reality he did grow like a waxing moon, steadily yet surely. Shivaji had declared war against the mighty empires and the kingdoms of those times, for his people's freedom and was on his way to establish *swaraj* but the world still regarded him as a mere rebel. Time had come for the world to recognise Shivaji as a sovereign. Shivaji needed a formal ceremony and official recognition as a king that would put him on par with the Mughal Emperor and the Adilshahi king.



There were other problems too. The country conquered by Shivaji could not become legally 'his' until he was officially a ruler, which he was not. But above all, he knew from the beginning that he was born

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48 The seals of Muslim Sultans, and Muslim and Hindu noblemen were usually in Persian. Even Shahaji and Jija Bai's seals were in Persian. However, Shivaji's seal was in Sanskrit. The seals of Shivaji's ministers and officials were also in Sanskrit (with the exception of Netoji Palkar).

to rule, his instinct that he was a leader of men was too overwhelming for him to ignore. 'Shivaji's desire for autonomy was deep and sincere. Nor can it be disputed that he was conscious of his own identity as a Hindu in a universe politically dominated by the Muslims. Shivaji is widely believed to be personally devoted to goddess Bhavani and he had a traditional Indian coronation ritual performed in 1674 in order to validate his status as a true king. It has been centuries since a full-fledged coronation in Indic mode had been conducted in the Maharashtra region, and the result was an invented tradition, a seeming revival of an ancient practice that was in fact quite new. Especially innovative were the preliminary ceremonies in which Shivaji did penance for having lived like a Maratha (cultivator) up to that point in time' (Aster and Talbot, 2006, p.238). 'Be that as it may, the demand of stability and prevalence of the rule of law in the eyes of the common populace necessitated formal and legal recognition to the State through a coronation according to hoary, time honoured custom' (Mehendale, 2011, p.479). Shivaji wanted to remove doubts from everyone's minds. It was not easy to rewrite the meaningful coronation *mantras* and the author had to be a scholar of Sanskrit as well as all the Vedas to be able to do that.

Gagabhatt was one such man, capable of reinventing and writing Hindu coronation rituals. His ancestors hailed from Maharashtra, but they had later migrated to Varanasi (Kashi). His forefathers had restored the temple of Vishwanath when it was demolished during earlier Muslim invasions. His father had authored many books and Gagabhatt too was a renowned author and had written critical and analytical books on scriptures, especially on Dharmashastra (the science of religion). On Shivaji's command, in 1664, several Pundits had met at Rajapur in a convention to discuss the subject of socio-religious matters. Gagabhatt was one of the participants and had met Shivaji then. He agreed to research the subject of coronation that had almost been forgotten. Gagabhatt had to pen the *mantras* and invent rituals that would establish Shivaji as a Kshatriya and worthy

of becoming a king. His new *mantras* must have been based on the ancient ones: *Oh, my new king, be like Indra – the king of Gods who gives protection. Be like the sun that gives light and life. Be like the wind that has no boundaries. Be like Yama, the God of death who grants people what they truly deserve. Be like Varuna – the God of the Sea who digests all the refuse of this world. Be like the lovely moon so that just one glimpse of you makes your people rapturous. Be like the fire that burns evil.*

The rituals included bathing the king and holding the royal umbrella over his head. We can just imagine how Shivaji, wearing white robes and decked in garlands must have sat on a gilded table, about two feet high. How his eight ministers must have waited around him (guarding the eight directions) with gold jugs full of holy water from the Ganges to be poured over their king's head.

The coronation was held on 6 June 1674 at Raigad (not Rajgad, where Shivaji lived for the first 25 years) in the Konkan. When Shivaji annexed the valley of Javali in 1656, the fort too was taken. Located 210 kilometres south of Mumbai, at the north-eastern edge of Javali, and 800 metres above the sea-level, the Rairi hill (later called Raigad) is a huge mass separated from the rest of the Sahyadri Mountains. It has a large plateau on the top protected by a steep rock-face from three sides. Due to its invincibility, Raigad was also known as 'Gibraltar of the East'.

Shivaji's architect Hiraji Indulkar had built a central palace with wood, an artificial lake known as Ganga Sagar, queen's chambers, market places, and walls around the fort fortified with watchtowers. There was only one way to reach the fort – a narrow road that led to Chit Darwaja, which is about 2 kilometres from Pachad, a village at the foothills. From Pachad a fairly steep climb (steps were built by Shivaji) led to Mahadarwaja – or the main gate – protected by bastions named Jai and Vijay, each about 70 feet high.

Several emblems made of silver and gold were used to establish Shivaji as the king. One must remember that the usage of emblems

was the prerogative of the Mughal emperor and even the Shia kings of the Deccan were prohibited to use them. Gagabhatt used them anyway and those were 'small fish', which signified the weak subjects whom the king was supposed to protect; a 'big fish' with fearsome jaws were the invaders from whom the weak would be protected. The fish heads also meant Shivaji's supremacy at sea. A gilded balance suggested justice. A *swastika* translated into *Su-Vastu*, which meant a 'good habitation'. Here, *swastika* represented the blue-print of a formidable fort. Pointed spikes indicated that aggression would be replied with counter aggression. Tails of horses tied to spears signified the superiority of the Maratha cavalry. The syllable of *oum* signified the boundlessness of the 'infinite', as *oum* accommodated everything including space, time, shape and energy of the universe. A huge throne covered with a magnificent umbrella, both made of gold and encrusted with jewels was made for the occasion. Many learned Brahmins from all over were invited to to witness the ceremony. Coins were struck bearing Shivaji's name and the documents from his office would henceforth address him as 'Kshatriya – Kulawantasa Shri Raja Shivachhatrapati', which translates to, 'Hailing from a Kshatriya family, King Chhatrapati Shivaji'. Thousands had arrived at Rairi fort and stayed on for weeks. A very large sum was spent for this occasion, and hence a tax called *Sinhasan Patti* was levied on watandars after the coronation. A council of eight ministers, an *Ashta-Pradhan* was appointed.

Shivaji's *Ashta-Pradhan* (Council of eight ministers):

1) Moro Pingle – Peshwa or the Prime Minister
2) Nilo Sondev – Muzumdar or Finance Minister
3) Annaji Datto – Surnis or Minister for Land Revenue (also called the Sachiv or Secretary)

4) Dattaji Trimbak – Vaknis or Minister of External and Internal Intelligence as well as espionage

5) Ramachandrapant Dabir (Grandson of Sonoji Dabir and son of Trimbak Dabir) – Dabir or Minister of External Affairs (also called Sumant)

6) Hansaji Mohite (titled Hambir Rao) – Sarnaubat or Commander-in-Chief of army

7) Niraji Raoji – Nyayadheesh or Chief Justice

8) Moreshwar (son of the Brahmin *vakeel* of Shivaji Raghunath) – Punditrao or Head of Religious affairs

The coronation was an elaborate ceremony that went on for nine days, replete with Vedic rituals, an *upanayan* ceremony, marriages and more. The foundation of the coronation was an ancient rite – Shivaji was anointed with a number of auspicious substances and was morphed into a representative of Indra (King-of-gods) on earth. Before this rite, Shivaji had to undergo the ceremony of *uapanayan* (also called the *munji* ceremony) as well as marriages (he married his existing wives). The reason given was that his earlier marriages to the same wives were performed without Shivaji undergoing the *munji* ceremony and that was not according to the Vedic rites. To prove that he was a Kshatriya, he underwent the *munji* and then got married again to his wives. It is believed that *munji* (a prerogative of the high-born) leads a boy (or man) closer to Brahma, the infinite, the *hiranya garbha*, the golden womb, the origin of the universe. This closeness with the unbounded sets his right to be initiated into learning. But the boy has to be a Brahmin or a Kshatriya or a Vaishya for *uapanayan*, or to learn Sanskrit in which the Hindu scriptures are written. Some even believe that it is a Vedic birth, a rebirth. The status of the born again Brahmin or Kshatriya or Vaishya boy is elevated by wearing a strap, a *janeu* made of three threads, each indicating three different basic traits that humans seek: purity, passion and pleasure. Once the thread is worn, the

boy is considered worthy of learning ancient Vedic scriptures of Hinduism and it begins then and there. The hallowed Gayatri Mantra would be recited by the priest performing the *upanayan* ritual, the *mantra* that seeks the sunlight to guide the intellect of the boy who is reborn in the spiritual world of the Brahmins or the Kshatriya.

Dr Sadanand More (2015), a renowned Marathi writer, poet, critic and professor interested in history has praised Gagabhatt by saying that what the scholar did in those times was remarkable. Dr More also states that the real innovative idea would have been to insist that 'anyone who could fight the invaders and free the country from the shackles of tyrannical landlords, anyone who could create an army with a chain-of-command and anyone who could be kind to his subjects was worthy of becoming a king, irrespective of his religion, caste and creed.'

Henry Oxenden, Head of the English Embassy, was present at the time of Shivaji's coronation at Rairi. Oxenden, along with George Robinson and Thomas Mitchell left Mumbai on 13 May on a small ship, reached Pachad (with a night's halt at Chaul) on 19 May and arrived at the Rairi fort on 22 May. The house where he stayed was at a distance of a 1.6 kilometres from the palace. It is interesting to note his narrative of their tour in his own words:

'*On June 5th Niroji Raoji (Pundit) sent me a word that on the morrow about 7 or 8 in the morning the Rajah Shivaji intended to ascend his throne, and he would take it kindly if I came to congratulate him therein, that it was necessary to present him with some small thing, it being not the custom of these parts to appear before a Prince empty handed. I sent him answer I would, according to his advice, wait on the Rajah at the prescribed time. Ditto the 6th. About 7 or 8 of the clock went to Court and found the Rajah seated in a magnificent throne and all the Nobles waiting on him* [in] *very rich attire, his Son Sambhaji Rajah, Peshwa Moro Pundit and a Brahmin of great eminence seated on an ascent under*

Fig. 13. The coronation of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj

the Throne, the rest, as well officers of the army as others, standing with great respect. I made my obeisance at a distance and Narayan Shenvi (the translator) held up the diamond ring which was to be presented to Shivaji Rajah. Shivaji Rajah presently took notice of us and commanded our coming nearer, even to the foot of the Throne, where being vested, we were desired to retire, which we did, but not so soon but that I took notice on each side of the throne there hung (according to the Muslim manner) on heads of gilded lances many emblems of Government and dominion, as on the right hand were two great fishes heads of gold with very large teeth; on the left hand several horses tails, a pair of gold scales on a very rich lance head poised equally, an emblem of justice, and as we returned at the Palace gate there was standing two small elephants on each side and two fair horses with bridles and rich furniture, which made us admire which way they brought them up the hill, the passage being so difficult and hazardous' (Anon., 1931, pp.14-15).

Henry Oxenden later had an audience with Chhatrapati Shivaji to discuss the compensation for the plunder of the English factory at Rajapur in 1664. Prince Sambhaji, now a strapping and very handsome young man of eighteen was present in this meeting. Nothing much came out of it though.

We can only but imagine how Shivaji might have looked during the actual ceremony, glorious in splendid royal silk robes, richly embroidered in gold, armed to the hilt. His saffron turban adorned with tassels of pearls. His mother Jija Bai, Gagabhatt and some of his learned Brahmins as well as Shivaji's eight ministers with him on the dais. His exquisitely beautiful Queen Consort Soyara and his handsome son Sambhaji as the official heir to the throne sitting by his side. After all the rituals and chanting of the *mantras* that must have shaken the positive energies breezing on the hilltop of Raigad and the mountains rising around it as well as through the valleys and forests around them, Shivaji must have risen and occupied the throne with restrained dignity. Small lotuses of gold set with precious stones must have been showered on the crowd. Drums,

bugles and bells must have broken into an auspicious orchestra while thousands of people must have stood up and thrown rose petals in the direction of the throne. The music must have stopped abruptly, plunging the entire place into some kind of providential silence. Then the priest must have announced, 'From this moment, Shivaji is called Shivaraya and is officially declared as the "Chhatrapati", the Protector, the Guardian, the Benefactor, the Defender, the Patron and the Emperor.' After the proclamation, the entire audience must have started clapping rapturously and then started showering their new king with vermilion stained rice grains and rose petals. At once the drums must have started beating, again holding the mountain air at ransom – but their sound must have gradually faded as the cannons must have started firing a salute from all sides[49].

When Emperor Aurangzeb received news of the coronation, he was crestfallen. As per Sabhasad's records, when Aurangzeb got the news he descended from the throne and vanished into his harem. He did not eat or drink water for two days and kept saying, 'God has taken away our kingdom, destroyed our throne and given it to the Marathas.'

After the Coronation

Jija Bai, now a Rajmata (queen mother), passed away just twelve days after the coronation at the age of 80. Her death was considered as an ill omen by some who said that the religious ceremonies conducted during the coronation did not adhere to some old Hindu customs and rites and so Shivaji had a second coronation ceremony performed on 24 September 1674.

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49 Shivaji started a new Era, commencing from the date of his coronation but he did not make use of this new calendar in routine official work. In some of the documents issued with his era, he is addressed as 'Kshatriya Kulawatansa Shri Raja Shivachhatrapati. Raja Shivachhatrapati was Shivaji's formal title after his coronation. His gold and copper coins have the same title inscribed on them, coins that were struck after his coronation.

Things began to happen rapidly after the coronation. In early 1975, Shivaji, now the Chhatrapati, left Raigad with 15,000 cavalrymen, 14,000 infantrymen and 10,000 labourers with pickaxes, crowbars and hatchets, and marched into the Konkan. Thereafter, Shivaji's forces besieged Phonda fort near Goa and captured Kolhapur as well as Panhala fort, all belonging to the Adilshahi. Taking over of Phonda by the Marathas was a threat to the Portuguese at Goa. The Marathas were in the process of taking over the trade of certain commodities and that was a threat to the English who wanted to start their activities in Rajapur and rebuilt their factories destroyed by the Marathas. They started a series of official meetings with Anna Datto who dictated the terms regarding the place of the new English factory at Rajapur.

On the Janjira front, the Siddis had lost many men in battles fought with the Marathas. The Marathas were angry with the English for allowing the Siddi ships to dock in Mumbai. The Maratha-English hostility increased when in the monsoons of 1675, the Marathas remained busy with ship building, as the English wrote several letters to each other complaining of the dearth of carpenters and blacksmiths. After the rainy season the Siddis sailed out to destroy Shivaji's fleet by setting fire to it at ports. They failed miserably and the Marathas drove them away. The Siddis devastated the nearby regions of Vengurla. Immediately the Marathas unleashed their fleet of 57 small, yet fighting-fit frigates into the sea. The English sailors who had seen both the fleets at sea hoped that the Marathas and the Siddis destroy each other because, for them, both were troublesome. By the end of that year the Marathas had tried to attack Janjira yet again, without success.

Some more political drama was unfolding at Bijapur. After the loss of Panhala and Kolhapur, Adilshahi's Grand *Wazir* Khawas Khan decided upon an age-old tactic – join hands with the Mughal to eliminate Chhatrapati Shivaji. He personally met Bahadur Khan, the new Mughal subhedar of the Deccan in October 1675 at

Pandharpur and signed a new Mughal Adilshahi Treaty of 1675 and the terms were:

1) Khawas Khan would invest all his army to launch a very aggressive attack on Shivaji.

2) The Mughals would waive off the yearly tribute money due from the Adilshahi.

3) Sikandar Adil Shah (the late Ali Adil Shah's son who must have been barely six) was to be granted the title of Shah.

4) Sikandar's sister Princess Shahar Banu Begum, a beautiful and intelligent young girl was to be given in marriage to one of the Mughal princes (sons of Aurangzeb).

To understand what transpired next one must know the political feuds happening at Bijapur, which was divided into two major groups – the Pathans hailing from Afghanistan and the Deccani Muslims (the converts). Sikandar was small and his grandmother, the Badi Sahiba too old to handle the matters of her kingdom. Khawas Khan, who was an Abyssinian, had turned powerful and he supported the Deccani Muslims. Bahlul Khan, who was the leader of the Afghans imprisoned Khawas Khan in November 1675 by deceit and declared himself as the Grand *Wazir* of the Adilshahi Sultanate. As soon as he took the position, Bahlul Khan started transferring Deccani Muslims away from Bijapur. One such Deccani Muslim was Minhaj Khan, who was sent to the sultanate's western frontiers to deal with the Marathas. There were traps within traps, and intrigues within intrigues. Minhaj started to plot against Balhul Khan who tried to eliminate him by inviting him to a feast but Minhaj escaped, and in the process Bahlul Khan's man was killed. An enraged Balhul Khan executed the imprisoned Khawas Khan in January 1676. Thus the Mughal Adilshahi Treaty of 1675 became redundant. Thereafter, fights broke out between Bahadur Khan, the Mughal subhedar and Bahlul Khan, the new Grand *Wazir* of the Adilshahi.

Around the end of 1675, Shivaji arrived at Raigad and fell seriously ill. There were rumours that he had died due to the illness but he recovered within weeks to organise another all out offensive against the Mughals, as if he had contemplated the battles while lying in bed. In early 1676 the Maratha cavalry galloped into the Mughal terrain and marched northwards plundering town after town reaching Aurangabad. The offensive strength of the Mughal lay in their heavy cavalry, and the Marathas avoided meeting them face-to-face. The Marathas' strength lay in disorganising the enemy ranks and that is what they did, in the process exhausting the enemy, their agile horsemen encircling the Mughals squadrons like a hurricane. At times, the Mughal sent a cavalry detachment to chase the Marathas who led them to isolated places where more Marathas waited in ambush thus destroying, demoralising, distracting and tiring out the Mughals. On the Adilshahi front the Maratha garrisons stationed at Panhala would go into Adilshahi terrain and plunder the region.

At Agra, Aurangzeb must have felt totally helpless and that must have made him take some hasty decisions. Netoji Palkar, now Mohammad Quli Khan, who was fighting at the empire's north-western borders was ordered to relocate to the Deccan and help Bahadur Khan eliminate Shivaji. Palkar was now the mansabdar of 3000 *dhat*/2000 *sawar* (he was demoted after Shivaji's escape from Agra). Mohammad Quli Khan did come to the Deccan and joined Bahadur Khan at Aurangabad. One fine day, Shivaji got the news that a Mughal mansabdar has come to his doorstep to surrender. Mohammad Quli Khan who had managed to escape from Aurangabad wanted to re-convert to Hinduism. Shivaji accepted him with great affection, and on 19 June 1676, after performing some rites and rituals Mohammad Quli Khan once again became Netoji Palkar and was back into the Hindu way of life. There are no historical records to know how Aurangzeb

must have reacted to this news but he went all out to help the Siddis of Janjira with vengeance. Moro Pingle, the Peshwa of the Maratha kingdom and his troopers camped about Danda Rajapuri all through the monsoon of 1676 to fight the Siddis. Thereafter, almost every year, the Marathas attacked Janjira, each time with better war ships and mightier artillery but without much success.

The Karnataka Campaign

Sometime in 1676, Niroji Raoji, the Chief Justice of the Maratha kingdom met Bahadur Khan, the Mughal subhedar of the Deccan. During the meeting, a large sum was paid to Bahadur Khan (as bribe) and a Peace Treaty was signed. Bahadur Khan who was also tired of warring with Shivaji had started withdrawing garrisons stationed in the Deccan. Shivaji was now somewhat free to divert his attention to Karnataka, which in the 17th century included parts of Tamil Nadu and was famous for its fertile land and riches. Acquisition of this territory would strengthen the foundation of the Maratha kingdom. There was also a very busy east coast, Coromandel (Cholamandalam) dotted with European warehouses. Highly ambitious about his navy Shivaji aspired to expand his 'ocean horizons' and get a foothold on India's east coast. It meant enormous opportunities in trading, getting to know the new techniques in ship building and new trade routes. The timing was right – a peace treaty was signed with the Mughal subhedar of the Deccan, so there was no danger of Mughal raids, the Adilshahi was facing serious problems after the death of Khawas Khan and every nobleman was trying to survive the politically riddled and intrigue infested Bijapur court.

There was trouble in the Adilshahi's coastal plains of Karnataka too. The region was divided into two administrative districts. The northern district up to Puducherry was governed by Nasir

Mohammad Khan[50] from the Gingee fort. The southern district was governed by Sher Khan, an Afghan noble who was Bahlul's protégé. This background made Nasir and Sher Khan natural enemies. Sher Khan was bent on annexing Gingee and had already attacked it (with the help of the French). To the west of this region, the uplands, was the *jagir* of Venkoji, Shivaji's stepbrother. Venkoji was Shahaji's son from his second wife Tukabai. Further south were the Hindu Rajas of Tanjore and Madurai who were ready to jump at each other's throats.

'Just as there is an outer (or military) front in war (or border in peace) there is an inner (political/psychological) front in both war and peace. The inner front is the province of the statesman, the outer front that of the general. Should this inner front collapse, the outer one will also be imperilled. Shivaji exploited his enemy's weakness on the inner front and subverted him from within. Very often, there exist some inherent cracks in the shape of religious, racial and linguistic differences, corruption and lack of motivation … A wise statesman, by his judicious administration, would deny the enemy an opportunity to drive a wedge in such a crack … Shivaji took advantage of the self seeking, ambitions and factional discords among his enemies' (Mehendale, 2011, p.620).

A few months before Shivaji's Karnataka campaign, one Raghunath Hanmante had come from Karnataka to meet Shivaji. Raghunath was an encyclopaedia on Karnataka, its political and socio-economical conditions and was also adept with the local language, Kannada. He was the son of Naro Dikshit, one of Shahaji's and his son Venkoji's trusted advisors. Raghunath Hanmante joined Shivaji's services in

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50 Nasir Mohammad Khan was the son of former Abyssinian Grand *Wazir* Khan Mohammad, who had been assassinated by Ali Adil Shah on the behest of Afzal Khan. Nasir was also Khawas Khan's brother; Khawas Khan, the Grand *Wazir* of the Adilshahi and who was assassinated on 18 January 1676 by his Afghan rival, Bahlul Khan.

early 1676. The idea of a conquest of Karnataka must have come from Raghunath. Shivaji and Raghunath Hanmante must have noted down the importance of capturing Karnataka. They might have contemplated the following: with most of the west-coast of the Deccan and Konkan now in the hands of the Marathas, the Adilshahi sultanate depended on the Cholamandalam coast for the supply of textile and spices. The Mughal Empire could buy thousands of war-horses from Central Asia from across their land frontiers but the Adilshahi depended on horses shipped to the east coast. By controlling Cholamandalam, Shivaji would and could have seriously weakened the already weak military of the Adilshahi. Further south the suicidal wars between the Hindu kings had continued and divided they were sure to fall. There was also a strong possibility of Aurangzeb descending on the Deccan bringing a huge army along with him. Neither would the Adilshahi nor the Qutbshahi be able to stop the avalanche of the Mughals. The Marathas could build a better army with the money they would get from the revenue rich Karnataka. Some of the forts like Gingee could serve as a retreat in military emergencies. Knowing the pathetic political situation of Adilshahi Karnataka, Shivaji wanted to push his stepbrother Venkoji to play a more active role in the politics of Karnataka. During the campaign, Shivaji planned to join hands with the Qutbshahi and fortify his power, and take over the formidable forts of Gingee and Vellore with the help of Qutb Shah. It was his most ambitious project so far.

The preparation for the new alliance was taking shape. Pralhad, Niroji Raoji's son was posted to Hyderabad as a Maratha diplomat. Before leaving for the south, Shivaji commanded Moro Pingle, the Peshwa of the Maratha kingdom to watch over the northern frontiers, Anna Datto, the Sacheev, to take care of the eastern frontiers, and Dattaji Trimbak, the Vaknis, to guard the south-eastern region. Raigad was entrusted to one Raoji Somnath. Shivaji's son Sambhaji, now 20 years old and the official heir to the Maratha kingdom, was sent

to Shringarpur as the subhedar of Prabhanvalli in the Ratnagiri district in Konkan. There are many theories as to why Shivaji did not take Sambhaji along with him to south, why Sambhaji was not given the responsibility of Raigad, and why Sambhaji was sent off to a not-so-important place in Ratnagiri district. However, talking about it would simply lead to speculation.

The Hyderabad Visit

Shivaji had planned the conquest meticuously. He would first visit Hyderabad and meet Tana Shah, the king of the Qutbshahi in his formidable fort of Golconda. Shivaji's army, now officially known as the great Maratha army of 20,000 fine cavalrymen, 40,000 infantrymen and countless labourers had assembled at the foothills of Raigad under the command of the Maratha Sarnaubat Hambir Rao Mohite on 6 October 1676. There were a few thousand civil administrators among them. This shows that Shivaji was not going south to plunder and destroy but to capture and restore. It was Dushera, the day Lord Rama won his famous battle against the demon-king Ravana. Some Maratha forces were already operating in Belgaum district. In the next few months, Shivaji would cover more than 1,000 kilometers and reach Hyderabad on 4 March 1677. We can just imagine how the dense mass of Maratha cavalrymen and infantrymen marching through the Karnataka country with their banners creating ripples of saffron in the air must have looked. Each of Shivaji's soldiers wore a uniform – a pair of tight breeches and pleated tunics of quilted cotton. Their heads were covered with Turkish turbans with one fold passing firmly under their chin. Their *dhop* swords gritted to their belts and their shields tied to their backs. They must have moved majestically, as if they wanted people to see them, respect them, fear them and admire them. What kept everyone guessing was the objective

of the march, and where the great Maratha army was moving and whom they would attack. The element of surprise was there, albeit in a different form.

As they neared Hyderabad, some of the select troopers got ready for the grand welcome expected from the people of Hyderabad. They were given pearl strings to attach to their helmets, gold bracelets, shining armour, and rich tunics embroidered with gold. The splendid looking army entered the city of Hyderabad, which boasted of sprawling gardens, tree-lined avenues, and breathtaking monuments. Hearts of the onlookers must have stopped beating for a moment when thousands and thousands of Maratha troopers entered the gates of Hyderabad. Shivaji and his war generals, dashing Hambirrao, Anand Rao, Yesaji Kank, Suryaji Malusare and Manaji Morey rode on caparisoned horses. Shivaji's Brahmin advisors wearing wide-rimmed *pagari* turbans and pearl-studded strings around their necks followed in their palanquins. Raghunath Hanmante, his brother Janardhan (who were until then known as uncrowned kings of Tanjore), Pralhad Nioji, the ambassador of the Maratha kingdom stationed at Hyderabad, Dattaji Trimbak, the minister of intelligence, Balaji Avaji, the scribe, and others (in the capacity of the auditors) were among them. Women came in large numbers to see their 'hero', Shivaji, who was chivalrous as well as respectful towards them; some welcomed him with lit lamps in their hands and some blessed him. The Qutbshahi king was the late Abdullah Qutb Shah's son-in-law. His ministers, brothers Madanna and Akkana were Brahmins. It was in fact, Madan who was ruling the Qutbshahi from behind the throne. The Qutbshahi King, Tana Shah, and Chhatrapati Shivaji met each other in a grand meeting at Balahisar Baradari of Golconda Fort, while expensive presents were exchanged.

A Dutchman, who was an eye-witness writes, 'King Shivaji entered by one door while the invitees entered by another. Qutb Shah came in by another door. They sat on seats prepared for them and they

entered into a conversation. When the meeting was going on, the hall was surrounded by 6,000 Marathas who moved so silently that a buzzing fly could have been heard' (Anon., 1931, p.350).

A Maratha-Qutbshahi treaty was signed and the terms were:

1) A contingent of the Qutbshahi army comprising of 4,000 infantry and 1,000 cavalry under Mirza Amin would accompany the Marathas in Adilshahi Karnataka.

2) The Qutbshah would give Shivaji 3,000 *hons* (15,000 rupees) a day during the expedition.

3) Shivaji was to give some annexed territories to the Qutbshah.

This treaty, however, eventually fell flat on its face because Shivaji did not part with any territory and Qutb Shah stopped the payment.

After staying for a month in Hyderabad the Maratha army marched south towards the Krishna River and visited the temple of Shri Sailam located on the side of a sacred as well as an ancient hill of Srigiri in the Nallamalai mountain range. The massive temple complex, constructed in the 2nd century, was enclosed in a meandering wall of large, hewn, greyish coloured blocks (3,200 in number).The wall was elaborately sculpted. The place had (and still does) one of the twelve Jotirlinga Shrines and it is one of the 18 most sacred Shakti Pithas. It was also famous for its breathtaking scenery. Shivaji spent ten days at Shri Shaila and the secluded beauty seemed to have touched his soul. As the story goes, Shivaji wanted to cut off his head and offer it to the shrine as he thought there was no better place than Shri Sailam to die. His ministers, however, advised him against it.

Shivaji and his army left Shri Sailam in the first week of April 1677 and arrived in the vicinity of Gingee Fort, which was built on three hillocks – Krishnagiri to the north, Rajagiri to the west

and Chandrayandurgam to the southeast (in the state of Tamil Nadu). The three hills together constitute a fort complex, each having a separate citadel. The kilometres-long fort walls that enclose the three hills are connected, enclosing an area of 11 square kilometres. The fort is built at a height of 240 metres and protected by a wide moat. The complex has a seven-storeyed structure, granaries, prison vaults, and a temple. The big innovation of the era was the construction of the first enclosure, with semi circular towers, surrounding Krishnagiri and extending to the eastern cliff of Chandrayandurgam, linking the three hills in the form of a triangle. With the development of siege artillery, the other mountains Kurangudurgam and Kusumalai were also fortified in the same way as well as the southwest spur of Chandrayandurgam. This was done for the protection of the explosives fired from the siege artillery. On a clear day, the Bay of Bengal could be seen glimmering on the eastern horizon. This made the fort of Gingee a strategic military stronghold. From here one could control the important ports of Cholamandalam.

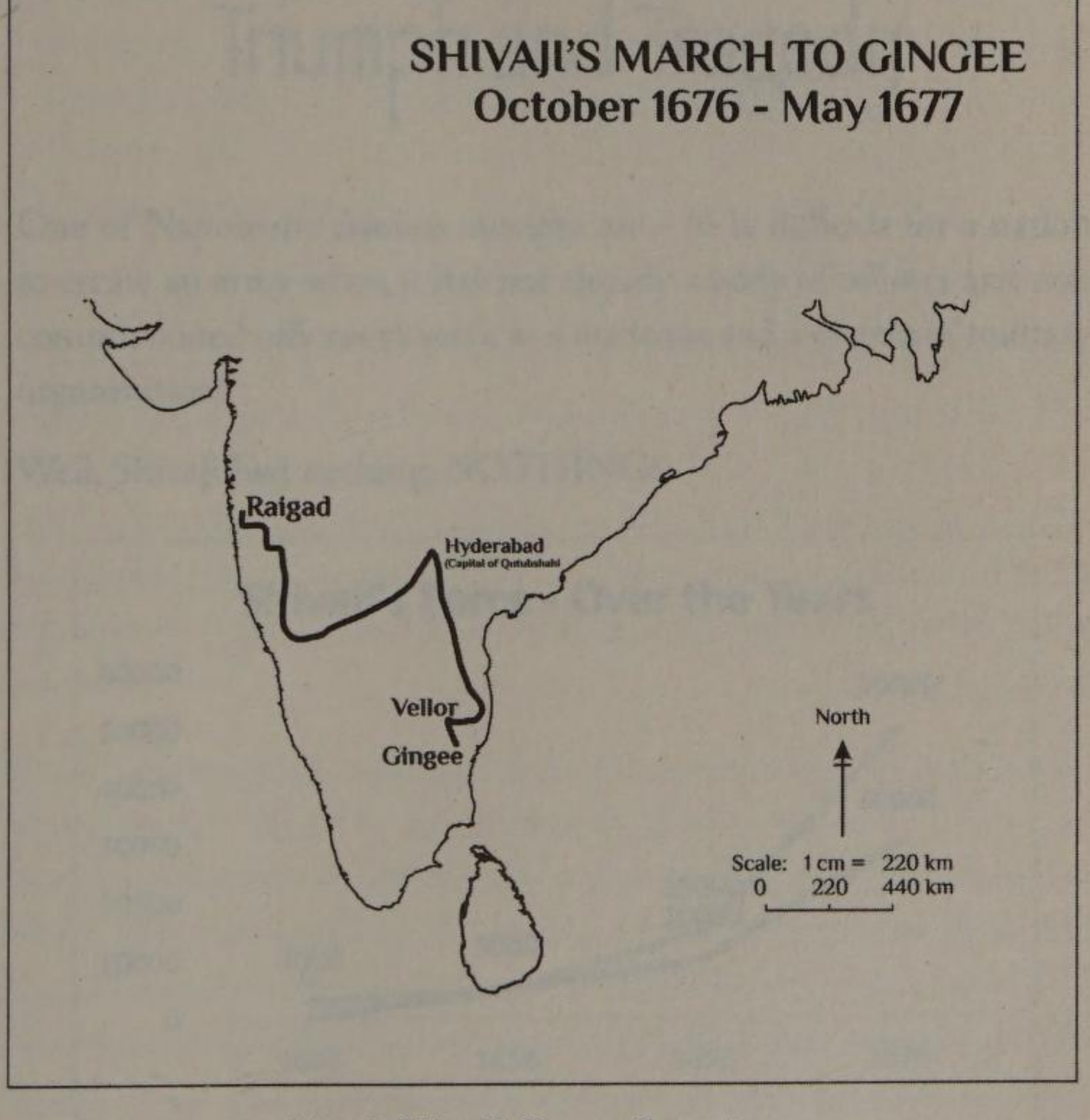
As mentioned before, Nasir Mohammad Khan who governed Adilshahi's northern coastal region in Karnataka was a worried man. His brother, Khawas Khan, the Grand *Wazir* of the Adilshahi was killed by Bahlul Khan. Sher Khan, Bahlul's confidant was after his blood. When he knew that the Maratha army was marching towards Gingee he prepared for surrender. He readily handed over the fort to Shivaji and fled. This bloodless victory surprised many. Shivaji appointed men to construct new ramparts, dig deeper ditches, raise towers and bastions as if he was creating a safe abode in case of an all out Mughal attack. Keeping the fort guarded by Maratha garrisons, Shivaji and his army headed for Vellore. The Vellore fort with a deep moat swarming with crocodiles was one of the strongest in south India and was minded by a brave Abyssinian named Abdullah Khan. The outer ramparts were wide enough for even elephants to walk on. The Marathas resorted to conventional warfare and besieged the fort.

Shivaji left the besiegement and on 20 June 1677 marched southwards to fight Sher Khan. The flood of Maratha invasions swept over the Karnataka plains. Only a few fortified places offered resistance and stood like islands above the waves of waters for some time.

Europeans did visit Shivaji during the campaign. In August 1677, two Dutchmen visited Shivaji's camp and the account of the visit goes like this: they waited for a while before the king entered along with Raghunath Hanmante and Janardhan. The king sat down with Raghunath by his side and Janardhan in front. The Dutchmen too sat down 1.5 metres from the king. After listening to their requests and accepting their presents the king reassured them of his favour and gave them permission to depart. The king gave presents to the Dutchmen for their chief. A report says that Shivaji's camp was without any pomp, without women, and no baggage, only two tents, but of simple cloth and very scanty, one for him and one for his minister.

The Dutch had a surprise in store: Shivaji wanted to abolish their profitable slave trade. Between 1659 and 1661, 8,000-10,000 slaves were shipped from central Coromandel ports. Domestic slavery was officially recognised by the English at Madras and run mainly by the Dutch.

After winning many regions in the south, Shivaji had written a letter to The Dutch Company, an exceprt of which goes: '*In the days of the Moorish [Muslim] government it was allowed for you to buy male slaves and female slaves here [in Karnataka], and to transport the same, without anyone preventing that. But you may not, as long as I am the Master of these lands … in case you were to do the same, amd would want to bring [slaves] aboard, my men will oppose that and prevent it in all ways*' (Mehendale, 2011, p.541).



Map 8. Shivaji's Deccan Campaign

CHAPTER 12

Triumph and Tragedy

One of Napoleon's famous remarks are – 'it is difficult for a nation to create an army when it has not already a body of officers and non commissioned officers to serve as a nucleous and a system of military organization!'

Well, Shivaji had nothing, NOTHING!

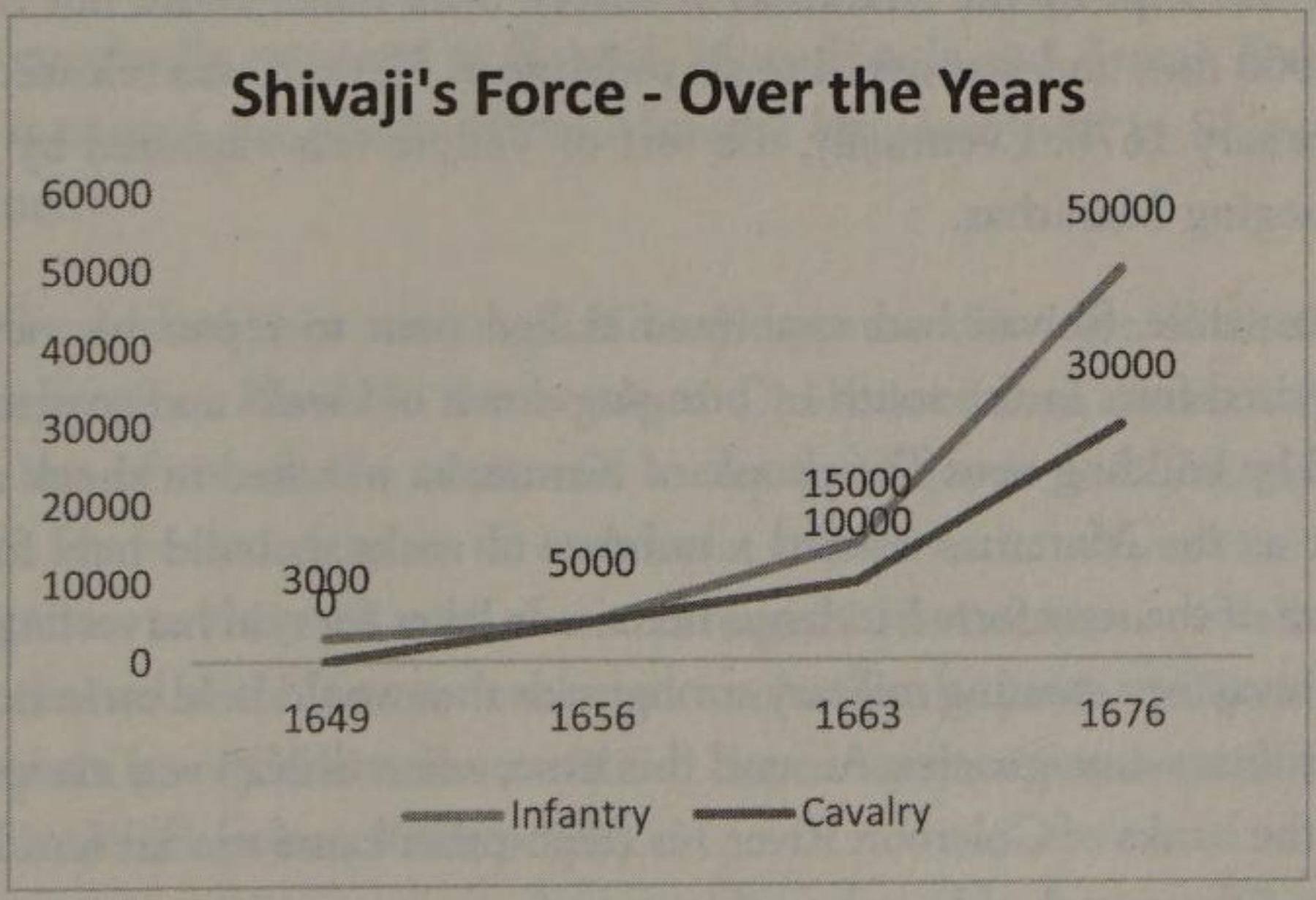


Fig. 14. The growth of Shivaji's Force over the years

The entire Karnataka country trembled with fear even though Shivaji's army observed his strict codes of war. Shivaji had not parted with any of the newly acquired region and the Qutbshah

had stopped his 3,000 *hon*-a-day tribute. Shivaji needed funds to proceed, and therefore he sent letters to the main trading places of the Cholamandalam coast demanding loans worth 200,000 *hons* (a million rupees). The demand was refused and an army of Marathas was unleashed to collect the money from the wealthy of the land. Meanwhile, Sher Khan was on the run, his army had 3,000 cavalrymen and 4,000 infantrymen. The Marathas were gunning for him, capturing places that came in their way. Sher Khan changed his mind, turned back and advanced to face the marauding Marathas. With this, he made a fatal mistake because the fear of the Marathas was so mind-blowing that his troopers fled helter-skelter; many of his cavalrymen, stripped of everything, passed through Puducherry, headed northwards and then disappeared. The Marathas collected hundreds of war animals left behind by the fleeing party as spoils of war. A tired Sher Khan gave up his fight on 5 July and agreed to surrender all his territory and pay a ransom of 20,000 *hons*. His son was kept by the Marathas as surety. Sher Khan could not raise 20,000 *hons* and was asked to go to Mysore. His son was released in February 1678. Eventually, the fort of Vellore was captured by the besieging Marathas.

Meanwhile, Shivaji had appointed skilled men to repair his newly acquired forts in the south by bringing down old walls and structures and by building new. The people of Karnataka watched in shock and fear as the Marathas blasted a number of rocks to build new forts. Each of the new forts had large, manmade lakes for rain harvesting, as if Shivaji was creating military strongholds that would hold on in times of military emergencies. Around this time, when Shivaji was camping on the banks of Coleroon River, his stepbrother came to visit him and stayed for a week although nothing much came out of this visit.

Having won many regions and military strongholds in Karnataka in October 1677 and capturing almost all the terrain north of the Kaveri River, Shivaji left for Raigad. Immediately after that Shivaji's stepbrother Venkoji joined hands with petty chieftains and put

together an army to drive away Shivaji's forces from Karnataka. A battle was fought and Venkoji was defeated. A letter was written by Shivaji to Venkoji that said, '*Many of your men were killed when you charged at us. You have enjoyed the entire* jagir (Shahaji's Bangalore *jagir) for thirteen years and we have let you, now give up the forts of Bangalore, Kolar, Shiral and Hoskote.*' Shivaji even offered him a large estate near Panhala but Venkoji did not accept the offer. He gave up Kolar to Shivaji. The territory annexed by Shivaji in Karnataka was estimated by Sabhasad to yield 2 million *hons* a year (about 10 million rupees) and about 100 forts, captured or built by Shivaji (Sarkar, 2007, p.237).

By the time Shivaji reached Raigad, the Marathas had already kick-started their naval activities from the Cholamandalam east-coast. Within months Raghunath Hanmante was successful in recruiting and raising an army of more than 10,000 cavalrymen and infantrymen in Karnataka. The Maratha Sarnaubat Hambir Rao eventually returned to Raigad. Moro Pingle and Annaji Datto had managed the affairs of the Maratha kingdom well in Shivaji's absence.

'By the end of this campaign, Shivaji became the ruler of all the lands between Nasik in the north to Cholamandalam coast in the east, less of course the territories under the Bijapur and Golconda rulers. He became famous all over India and his name was written in dispatches to the west with awe and respect. He became a power to be reckoned with. If anyone wanted to change the power balance in the south, he could not do so without the concurrence and assistance of Shivaji!' (Palsokar, 2003, p.227).

When Shivaji was away in Karnataka, a farce was taking place in the other parts of the Deccan. Bahadur Khan, the Mughal subhedar of the Deccan who had signed the Peace Treaty with the Marathas must have felt aghast when he learnt about the success of Shivaji in Karnataka. His master, Emperor Aurangzeb must have been livid.

During all this time, Bahadur Khan had not done much work other than fighting meaningless battles with the Adilshahi's Bahlul Khan and exhausting the Mughal army for no gain. To add insult to injury, Bahadur Khan was once again made to sign a Peace Treaty with the Adilshahi's nobleman, Bahlul Khan, through the mediation of Diler Khan, who was also an Afghan like Bahlul. Aurangzeb, highly displeased with the affairs of the Deccan, summoned Bahadur Khan to his court sometime in August 1677 and made Diler Khan the Mughal subhedar of the Deccan – he did not have an option, since none of his men were capable and not a single mansabdar was fired by patriotism. Diler Khan too could not get the Adilshahi army to join him to launch an offensive against Shivaji for two reasons: one was that the monsoon had arrived and it was far too much of a hassle to enter the mountains or the coastal Konkan, and second, the Adilshahi needed enough garrisons at their southern borders (rear) to protect their kingdom from the garrisons of the Marathas scattered in Karnataka. Diler Khan needed to show Aurangzeb that he was active, so he and Bahlul attempted an aimless attack on the Qutbshahi with little success. Bahlul Khan died at Gulbarga in December 1677, and his right-hand man, another Afghan named Jamshed Khan came to power. Jamshed handed over all the powers to the Deccani fraction in the Bijapur court, (the old feuds between the Deccani Muslims and the Afghans were boiling over). Their leader, Siddi Masud, (son-in-law of Siddi Jauhar, famous for his Panhala Battle) had become the Grand *Wazir* of the Adilshahi. Siddi Masud started fighting petty battles with late Bahlul's followers, and total anarchy prevailed in Bijapur.

Aurangzeb's treachery

Mirza Raja Jai Singh, the empire's most powerful Rajput general was long dead, and Maharaja Jaswant Singh Rathod was fighting battles for the Mughal Empire at godforsaken places at the north-western

borders. His two elder sons had died fighting battles for the Mughals and his third son Prithvi was minding the matters of their kingdom at Marwar (Jodhpur). Aurangzeb wanted to annex Jodhpur which was until then under the vassalage of the empire. He invited young Prithvi and honoured him with robes-on-honour that were drenched in poison and then dried. 'The wily tyrant Aurangzeb (1618–1707) sent Jaswant Singh (1638–1678) to war in Afghanistan. Then he commanded Jaswant Singh's son, Prithwi Singh to attend his court and received him with courtesy. Pretending friendship Aurangzeb presented Prithwi with a splendid dress and as per the customs, Prithwi wore the robe immediately. That was the last day of his life. After reaching his quarters Prithwi died in great agony' (Maskiell and Mayor, 2001, p.167).

A heartbroken Maharaja Jaswant Singh died in his camp soon after he got the news. After Jasawant's death Aurangzeb hastily moved to Ajmer in Rajasthan and unleashed his contingent in Marwar. All the Rajput warriors of Marwar were fighting battles for the empire (for Aurangzeb) at the north-western borders. Aurangzeb thought it would be an easy victory but he was in for a shock. The youth, the peasants and many others of Jodhpur offered tough resistance to Aurangzeb's troopers. Thousands died in this battle but finally Marwar was annexed, and the treasure and assets of the ruling family were confiscated and Marwar was declared as a province of the Mughal Empire. How Aurangzeb's troopers chased Jaswant Singh's two pregnant wives to eliminate any male heir was even more appalling. The women were taken to a secret place by Durgadas Rathod, a prominent warrior of Jodhpur. One of them delivered a male child who was named Ajit Singh. Durgadas went to Delhi to plead the recognition of Ajit Singh as the heir. Aurangzeb proposed that Ajit would be raised in the royal harem of the Mughals and Ajit Singh would be given the throne of Jodhpur provided he was raised as a Muslim. Durgadas did not agree and he struggled for years battling with the Mughals.

The following events are based on '*Aurangzeb, as he was according to Mughal Records*', an exhibition mounted by FACT – India. It contains, and is based on *farmans*, original edicts in Persian issued by Aurangzeb, preserved at the Bikaner Museum, Rajasthan, India[51].

Aurangzeb's zeal for temple destruction became much more intense during war conditions. The opportunity to earn religious merit by demolishing hundreds of temples soon came to him in 1679 after the death of Maharaja Jaswant Singh. As per historical records, Maharana Raj Singh of Mewar (Udaipur), in line with the great traditions of his House (Maharana Pratap), came out in open support of the Rathors of Jodhpur. The Mughals started battling with both Udaipur and Jodhpur during which the temples built on the bank of Rana's lake were destroyed by Aurangzeb's orders (*Akhbarat*, 23 December 1679). On Sunday, 25 May 1679, one of Aurangzeb's generals, Khan Jahan Bahadur came from Jodhpur after demolishing the temples and bringing cart-loads of dislodged idols. Aurangzeb praised him and ordered that the idols, which were mostly jewelled, and made of gold, silver, bronze or stone should be cast in the yard (*jilaukhanah*) of the Court and under the steps of Jama Masjid to be trodden on. Such uncivilised and arrogant conduct of the Mughal Emperor angered and alienated the Hindus. In June 1681 orders were given for the demolition of the highly respected Jagannath Temple in Orissa (*Akhbarat*, 1 June 1681). Shortly afterwards, in September 1682, the famous Bindu-Madhav temple in Banaras was also demolished as per the Emperor's orders (*Akhbarat*, 26 July). On 1 September 1681, while proceeding to the Deccan, Aurangzeb was livid since his son Akbar, escorted by Durga Das Rathore, joined Shivaji's son, Sambhaji. Aurangzeb ordered that all the temples on the way should be destroyed (*Akhbarat*, 25 July).

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[51] Archives of principalities in Rajputana are preserved here. The collection contains extracts of *Akhbarat* (newsletters), which is a record on day to day basis of what transpired in the Mughal courts; the Emperor would inspect them for accuracy at the end of the day and order necessary changes.

It was a comprehensive order not distinguishing between old and newly built temples. In his religious frenzy, even temples of the loyal and friendly Amber state such as the famous temple of Jagdish at Goner, were not spared. In fact, his misguided ardour for temple destruction did not abate almost up to the end of his life, for as late as 1 January 1705 he ordered that the temple of Pandharpur be demolished and the butchers of the camp be sent to slaughter cows in the temple precincts.

'It is true that, given the conditions of those days, Shivaji's kingdom was favorable to Hindus. It is also true that there is a reason to believe that in one or two cases he restored temples which had been demolished or forcibly converted to mosques by previous Muslim regimes. However this must not be taken to mean that he made it a daily practice. He was not a religious fanatic and his kingdom, though it cherished Hinduism, was not a theocracy' (Mehendale, 2011, p.404). 'Shivaji's swaraj was not based on religious dictates, and there was no politics of religion in his state administration' (Kulkarni, 1999, p.101). A stark contrast to Aurangzeb's Empire!

After Marwar, Aurangzeb returned to Delhi on 2 April 1679 and the very next day he declared imposition of *jiziyah* on Hindus throughout his Empire. Many Muslim orthodox believed that only Christians and Jews were allowed to live by paying *jiziyah* tax, but the idolaters (Hindus) should be given only two options, either embrace Islam or die. Aurangzeb went by the relatively mild Hanafi teachings[52]. 'Imposition of the *jiziyah* tax was a badge of inferiority. The particular thing about payment of *jiziyah* was that the payer had to pay it personally to the Collector and behave humbly and

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52 Hanafi is one of the four religious Sunni schools of law that said that it was okay to collect the *jiziyah* tax from the Hindus and allow them to live, despite them not embracing Islam. If the Hindus who refused to embrace Islam were killed in large numbers, they would have no chance to change their mind and convert.

reverently. The idea behind the payment of *jiziyah* was that on account of sheer economic pressure and the humiliation, the bulk of Hindus would one day be obliged to become Muslims. But that did not happen' (Mahajan, 1991, p.369).

Jiziyah came as a shock to the entire Hindu population. There were riots in North India in 1679. On a Friday, when Aurangzeb was going to Jama Mosque from the Red Fort the entire road was blocked by Hindu agitators. An enraged Aurangzeb's palanquin was stuck in the crowd for hours. He ordered the unleashing of war elephants on people and in the ensuing stampede thousands were crushed to death.

At this point, Aurangzeb was also busy with some other things that could be labelled as treachery of the highest order. Akbar (Aurangzeb's son from his beloved wife Dilras Banu) was told by Aurangzeb to try to bribe some Rajput warriors of Marwar and bring them under the Mughal banner. Instead, the Rajputs incited Akbar to rebel against his father and offered all support. They reminded him of Aurangzeb's open bigotry and re-imposing of *jiziyah* as well as demolishing temples, which was contrary to the wise policies of his ancestors. And thus, Akbar decided to rebel against his father with his 12,000 horsemen. Several thousand Rajputs joined him. Aurangzeb was livid and did not spare even Akbar. He wrote a false letter to Akbar and arranged it in such a way that the letter fell into the Rajputs' hands. In the letter, Aurangzeb congratulated his son for cheating the Rajputs to create misunderstandings. Aurangzeb had also bribed the generals of Akbar. What must have been brewing in Aurangzeb's mind? Did he want the enraged Rajputs to kill his son? It might have happened that way since thousands of Akbar's cavalrymen deserted him, leaving him vulnerable. It was Akbar's sheer luck that he caught up with the Rajputs and told them the truth and they believed him. From then onwards, Akbar became an archenemy of his father.

Aurangzeb's other son, Sultan Mohammad from Nawab Bai, had died a depressed and heartbroken man's death in Gwalior fort just a few years earlier. With Akbar joining the Rajputs, Aurangzeb was left only with Muazzam (from Nawab Bai), Azam (from Dilras Banu) and Kambaksh (from Udepuri). Until his death, Aurangzeb wouldn't trust any of his sons.

While this was going on in the north, some other battles were taking place in the Konkan. When Shivaji was away in Karnataka, the English were busy expanding their business. Diplomatic to the core, they wanted to be in the good books of the Mughals as well as the Marathas and do business with both. Their base, Mumbai, depended on the Maratha-occupied Konkan for the supply of firewood. The Marathas also had problems – the Siddis of Janjira with their strong fleet of ships were not allowing the Marathas to have total freedom of movement on the high seas. The Marathas could do little to tame the Siddis who always took refuge in Mumbai and sailed to Janjira as well as Surat for business. Shivaji by now had understood that unless he tamed the Siddis, he and his navy would not have unrestrained freedom over the seas. Capturing the invincible Janjira was next to impossible so he had to find a solution, and the solution came in the form of Khanderi. The Siddis had to sail by this island that lay between Mumbai and Janjira. Shivaji wanted to complete the project of building the fort at Khanderi and the work started in heavy rains in the year 1679. The English were alarmed because once the Khanderi fort was commissioned Mumbai would be just 16 kilometres away from the clutches of the Marathas. In the month of September 1679 they passed a resolution. They believed that they had the 'right' over that island and they would send their war ships to stop the Maratha ships transporting men and material to Khanderi. Come October and the English deployed a frigate and some ships to stop even water supply to the island. Shivaji's admiral Daulat Khan sailed with 50 small ships and

drove away the English ships. He then surrounded the English frigate with his ships and the English fired back. Daulat Khan retreated but within days he went back nonchalantly with full force, his fleet containing supplies for the Maratha workers on the island. For some reason, the English watched helplessly. A few days later Shivaji prepared to attack Mumbai with 4,000 men who had gathered near Kalyan. The English in Mumbai wanted to fight back but their superiors in Surat thought the cost of such a battle may be far more than the profits they would make. Again for some reason, even the Marathas gave up the idea. The third party was creating problems though. The Siddis who used to take shelter in Mumbai and plunder the Maratha regions in Konkan had turned into a menace. Despite Shivaji warning the English several times they had kept sheltering the Siddis and allowing them to anchor their fleet near the Bombay harbour. Even the Portuguese supported the Siddis because they knew that if Shivaji was allowed to grow he would break their monopoly over the trading of horses, spices and explosives. Shivaji would also ban the slave trade that was profitable to the Europeans. In November 1679, the Siddis as well as the English tried to attack and create trouble but by then the Marathas had fortified Khanderi as well as Underi islands and made them fit for fighting. However, the Siddis continued to create trouble and were successful in capturing the island of Underi.

'Shivaji's policy towards the English confirms that he was a visionary. Ramachandrapant Amatya says in his famous treaties that merchants are the ornaments of the kingdom, that includes the Firangi (Portuguese), the Ingraj (English), Valande (Dutch) and the Dingmar (Danes). Nevertheless, these have full ambitions to bring provinces under their control and hence they should be restricted to only coming and going. They should strictly never be given the places to settle, and never be allowed to visit sea-forts. Their strength lies in navy, guns and ammunition. If any place is given to them to

build their warehouses, it must be between the towns and several kilometres away from the mouth of the sea. They should not be allowed to build fortresses (Sardesai, 2002, p.851).

Sambhaji joins the Mughals

When Shivaji was trying to organise his kingdom after a long stay at Karnataka, on 13 Dec 1678, his son Sambhaji defected to the Mughals. When he was in the Konkan, Diler Khan secretly sent messengers and offered Sambhaji a post of high ranking mansabdar (7000 *dhat*). When Sambhaji arrived in Diler's camp, which was somewhere near Miraj in Maharashtra, the Khan immediately conveyed the good news to Aurangzeb.

The question that still remains unsolved is why did Sambhaji do it? What kind of person was Sambhaji? Born on 14 May 1657 to Shivaji's eldest wife Sayee Bai, she had passed away on 5 September 1659 when Sambhaji was just a toddler. He grew up primarily under the care of his grandmother Jija Bai and as anyone can guess, she must have been extremely fond of her first grandson who had lost his mother. At the age of seven he was made a Mughal mansabdar and kept in Mirza Jai Singh's camp near Saswad as surety where he had met Diler Khan, who had given him some presents. At the age of eight or nine he had visited Agra with his father and was left behind at Mathura. He must have had some anxious moments as a child and a feeling of abandonment. After his return from Mathura he was sent to Aurangabad as the Mughal mansabdar to pay his respects to prince Muazzam, the Mughal subhedar of the Deccan. The Mughals were, in a way, already a part of his life. There are various stories and hypotheses as to why Sambhaji went to the Mughal but they do not have any historical backup. We also do not know about the relationship between father and son. Was Shivaji a strict disciplinarian as a father? Did he have very high expectations for his elder son? Was Sambhaji feeling neglected or wronged, did he pine

for attention and importance from his father? There is a possibility that Sambhaji, as a child, must have had all the complexes of a boy whose father is a superhero in real life with whom he would be compared to, measured and judged all through his life and centuries thereafter. There is, however, one possible explanation that sounds logical. According to Mehendale (2011, p.598), 'the generation gap is not a new invention. This would be especially pronounced when the father was as able and exacting as Shivaji.'

Diler Khan, now the Mughal subhedar of the Deccan hoped to win many a Maratha terrain using Sambhaji as bait. His first target was Bhupalgad fort, newly built by Shivaji near Kolhapur. The fort commander was Firangoji Narsala who had fiercely defended the Chakan Fort during the attack by Shaista Khan. Bhupalgad was kept in a fit-for-fighting condition and was well stocked with provisions and explosives. On the night of 3 April 1679, Firangoji was told that the Mughals had arrived with Sambhaji. Knowing that the Maratha prince was at the foothills, Firangoji did not want to retaliate and hurt Sambhaji, so instead of launching an attack he fled. Diler Khan dragged the cannon up the hill and bombarded the fort and reduced it to rubble in one night. Large amounts of grain fell into the Mughal hands, who took 600 men of the fort garrison as prisoners. They were let go of only after Diler Khan's men amputated one hand of each prisoner.

This was a big blow to the Marathas but worse things were happening in the Mughal as well as Adilshahi terrains. The administration had broken down and there was no law and order. People were suffering. The only land that was effectively ruled was the land under Shivaji. Diler Khan, the Mughal subhedar of the Deccan had completely abandoned his other duties of a statesman and was roaming the Deccan plains like a rabid dog. He had also started his political intrigues with the Adilshahi's 'pro-Mughal' noblemen hoping to take over Bijapur without bloodshed but that did not work out.

Masud who was anti-Mughal was now the Grand *Wazir* of Adilshahi and reported to their boy king Sikandar. The pro-Mughal noblemen in Bijapur's court did not support Masud and all the energies of these noblemen were getting exhausted in irrelevant arguments and fights. Meanwhile, in August 1679 Diler Khan crossed the Bhima River from the north and came 60 kilometres away from Bijapur. He decided to attack the Adilshahi capital and started moving rapidly towards Bijapur along with his contingents. He had to give up his campaign mid-way because his funds got exhausted and he did not have any money to pay his troopers. This shows how disorder prevailed not only in the Mughal territories but in the Mughal army as well.

Siddi Masud got in touch with Shivaji and he decided to help the Adilshahi stop Diler Khan's invasions. Shivaji came with 10,000 troopers and camped west of Bijapur. In the north, Aurangzeb feared that Masud may join hands with Shivaji or even hand over Bijapur to the Marathas. There were talks in Aurangzeb's court of how useless Diler Khan was in handling the matters in the Deccan. At the same time, some other war strategies were sloshing in Shivaji's mind. On 5 November 1679, he split his army into two and entered the Mughal territory and plundered a few towns and marketplaces. It was primarily to divert Diler Khan's attention from the Adilshahi territory but the Mughal subhedar ignored Shivaji's attacks of his terrain and stayed put in the Adilshahi territory.

During this time Shivaji wrote several letters describing Sambhaji deserting him and his various battles with the Mughals to his brother Venkoji in Karnataka. The letters show that Shivaji was ready to help Adilshahi and keep the Mughals away from the Deccan.

Anyone can guess that Sambhaji, who was in Diler's camp at this point, must have been a totally disillusioned man. He had only seen the grandeur of the Mughals but now he was witnessing the disorder, aimlessness, lack of money, hunger and frustration in their

camps. The ground reality was horrific, beyond his worst nightmares. He was shown the heavens and was pushed into a hell.

Gradually Diler Khan turned aggressive and frustrated, angry and more rabid than ever before. He had realised that Sambhaji could not be used to bring Shivaji to his knees. He unleashed his army in the Adilshahi territory, his men ransacked, burnt, killed and raped, no holds barred. Hundreds of Hindu and Muslim women jumped into wells to save their honour and thousands were taken as captives. Diler Khan went from village to village, his troopers plundering and taking more and more captives. One can just imagine Sambhaji's plight who had till now seen only the grand palaces and high living of the Mughal royalty at Agra and Aurangabad. He must have realized that Diler Khan was using him as a mere tool to weaken his father.

It is well documented that Shivaji had sent his men to rescue Sambhaji from the clutches of the Mughals. Sambhaji escaped the Mughal camp and reached Bijapur on 23 November 1679. When Diler Khan learnt about Sambhaji's escape, he turned insane and started devastating the Adilshahi territory with new vigour. Finally, with whatever army he had, he besieged Bijapur.

Thereafter, Sambhaji and Shivaji met at Panhala in December 1679, little knowing the fact that an impending tragedy was looming over them. We can just imagine how the illustrious father might have admonished his son, and how Sambhaji who loved his father dearly must have reacted.

Shivaji's death

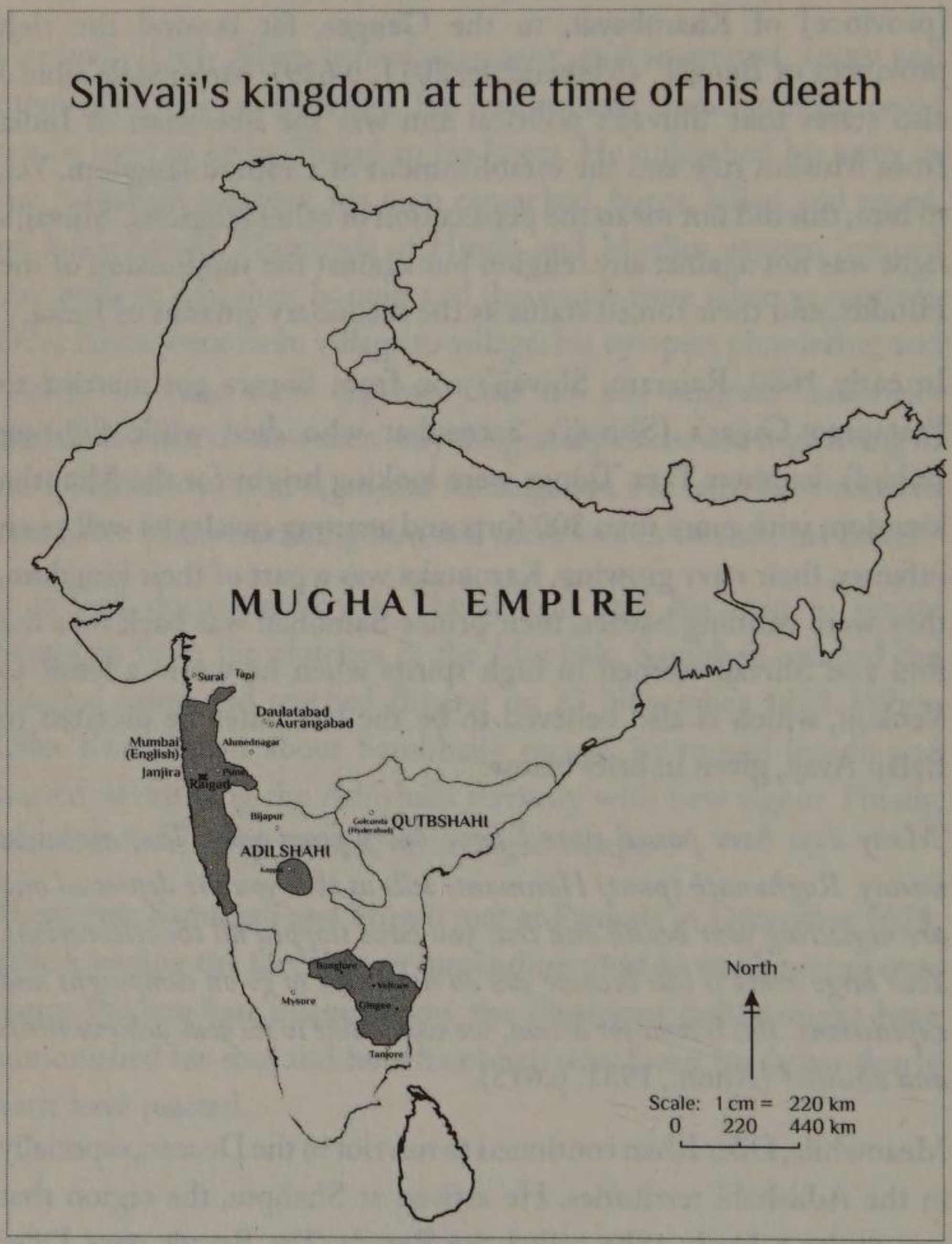
'In 1673, Carré had occasion to meet the governor of Chaul in Shivaji's dominion. After his business was finished the Frenchman entered into a conversation with the Maratha officer. Narrating the incident in his book, he states: "I then asked him about Shivaji, his

master, and he told me that that hero intended to push his conquests from the river Indus, which forms the boundary of the kingdom [province] of Khambayat, to the Ganges, far beyond the rich provinces of Bengal'" (Mehendale, 2011, p.619). Mehendale (ibid.) also states that 'Shivaji's political aim was the liberation of India from Muslim rule and the establishment of a Hindu kingdom. Yet, to him, this did not mean the persecution of other religions.' Shivaji's fight was not against any religion but against the suppression of the Hindus, and their forced status as the secondary citizens of India.

In early 1680, Rajaram, Shivaji's son from Soyara got married to Prataprao Gujar's (Shivaji's Sarnaubat who died while fighting Bahlul) daughter Tara. Things were looking bright for the Maratha kingdom with more than 300 forts and a strong cavalry as well as an infantry, their navy growing, Karnataka was a part of their kingdom, they were winning battles, their prince Sambhaji was back into the fold and Shivaji seemed in high spirits when he wrote a letter to Venkoji, which is also believed to be the last letter he dictated to Balaji Avaji, given in brief below:

'*Many days have passed since I have heard from you. That makes us uneasy. Raghunath (pant) Hanmante tells us that you are depressed and are neglecting your health and that you have stopped all the celebrations. Your large army is idle because you do not want to go on campaigns and expeditions. This is time for action, we would like to see your achievements and abilities*' (Anon., 1931, p.615).

Meanwhile, Diler Khan continued to run riot in the Deccan, especially in the Adilshahi territories. He arrived at Shahpur, the region that was under a hardy tribe called the Berads. The Berads gave Diler Khan a tough fight. Diler Khan sent 11 negotiators to discuss, but the Berads killed nine of them and threw the remaining two into the dungeons. In the fight that ensued, 1,700 Mughals were either killed or wounded. It was said that Diler Khan wept after his defeat. Shivaji ordered his troopers to hound Diler Khan and bring him to his knees.



Map 9. Size of the Maratha kingdom around the time of Shivaji's death in 1680

Just after this incident, Shivaji returned to Raigad and fell seriously ill. He passed away on 3 April 1680. Just like that. Some historians say that he had high fever for days and vomited blood the day he died. Since he was constantly in the battlefield before he passed away he might not have suffered from a chronic illness. Some speculate that he had typhoid. Shivaji had died, leaving behind hundreds of forts that were in fit-for-fighting condition, his strong cavalry and infantry force, his naval ports, a fleet of war ships, military officials carefully selected by him, millions of subjects who loved him dearly and whom he loved from his heart, and his plans for his beloved country.

Sabhasad writes about Shivaji's death in his own style, 'the mountain ranges exploded in fragments, lightning struck again and again. The sky scurried towards the horizon leaving a gaping hole on the top, an abysmal void, void that allowed collision of the comets. The lakes turned bloody. The terrain felt seismic spasms – developing huge bottomless gaps. Menacing clouds went haywire as the wind blew haphazardly, smarting under the impact of its own aimless force. The valleys caved in, dragging the land along while the slopes collapsed and vanished.' The world lost one of its greatest men on 3 April 1680, and that is for sure. A great leader who had the natural capacity to recognise the talent and separate chaff from the grain, whose heart bled for the poorest of the poor but who did not stop at that and went ahead making them warriors to fight for their freedom, and who had the courage to do what he believed in had left this world – never to return again and say his favourite line, '*Swaraj* is *Shri*'s (God's) wish.'

For whom for whom,
they might have questioned,
fate was so unkind,
for the one who left
or for the ones
who were left behind?

Epilogue

Shivaji had died suddenly but his dream did not die with him. He had thawed the frozen minds of the Marathas and infused the fire of freedom into their hearts. In short, he had taught them to intercept destiny and bring about a change.

Within a year after Shivaji's death, an obsessed and confident Aurangzeb descended on the Deccan with a huge army. The following years saw the annexation of the Adilshahi and the Qutbshahi sultanates. Aurangzeb's aspiration of taking over the entire Deccan was thwarted by the Marathas despite the tragic death of Sambhaji. It was in 1689 when Sambhaji was captured by Aurangzeb's men at Sangameshwar in Konkan. Some historians blame Sambhaji for his carelessness and some say it was treachery committed by his wife's cousins. As the story goes, Aurangzeb gave Sambhaji an option of converting to Islam and live, which he refused. Aurangzeb also asked him to order his men to give up the forts, but Sambhaji did not comply. Years of hatred that Aurangzeb had felt for the Bhosale men boiled over, and Sambhaji was tortured in the most humiliating and brutal manner. He was made to wear a buffoon's attire and was paraded on a camel through the Mughal camp. Later, his tongue was cut, eyes were gorged out and his body was cut into pieces and fed to dogs.

Sambhaji's heroic death angered every single Maratha fighter. Sambhaji's younger brother Rajaram was declared as the next Chhatrapati at their capital Raigad. The Maratha generals gathered for the occasion took an unanimous decision, they would withdraw all peace offers made to the Mughal and fight them with a single aim

to repel them and thus began the second phase of the long drawn out war.

This phase saw crushing defeats being inflicted on the Mughal army by the driven Maratha fighters and their determined onslaught. Santaji Ghorpade, Dhanaji Jadhav, Nimbaji Shinde, Parya Naik to name a few, had unleashed their contingents and scattered the Mughal army. Aurangzeb was now well into his eighties, his camp was repeatedly hit by an epidemic of cholera, while his son Azam's camp was hit by plague. To add insult to injury Aurangzeb was away for 25 years from Delhi and Agra, the seat of the Mughal power. With the Emperor not at the helm, the empire's economy had collapsed. Aurangzeb found it difficult to pay his military men and as the arrears mounted, the unpaid and disgruntled soldiers stopped obeying and did what they pleased. Most wanted to go home, a home they had left a quarter century ago. Aurangzeb was disheartened by their behavior and shocked by the relentless Maratha offensives. He fell ill and died on Friday, 21 February 1707 at Ahmednagar at the ripe old age of 88. The Mughal Maratha war continued and that was the beginning of the end of Muslim rule in India. Within a century, the Marathas struck Delhi and took on the European armies, but that is another story.

Eventually, as the country was taken over by the English, another struggle began for the freedom of India, for *swaraj*. Many of our leaders, directly or indirectly, took inspiration from Shivaji. Even today, there are lessons to be learnt from his life, and this is what comes to my mind:

'He had lit a lamp,
Its flame rising above the fires of any war
Its light cutting through the years
Like the beam of a star
Despite, the gloom still fills the skies
Because,
We have lost our eyes.'

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

1489	The Nizamshahi Sultanate is established with Ahmednagar (in present day Maharashtra) as its capital.
1489	The Adilshahi Sultanate rule is established with Bijapur (in present day Karnataka) as its capital.
1512	The Qutbshahi rule is established with Hyderabad (in present day Telangana/Andhra Pradesh) as its capital.
1497	Vasco da Gama arrives at the west coast of India
1526	Battle of Panipat; marks the beginning of the Mughal rule in north India.
1600	Raja Shahaji (Shivaji's father) is born. The British East India Company is established.
1605	Emperor Akbar dies; Jehangir becomes the Mughal Emperor.
1630	Shivaji is born at Shivaneri Fort
1636	The Nizamshahi Sultanate is annexed, followed by a Mughal-Adilshahi treaty dividing the Nizamshahi territory between the two kingdoms.
1639–1646	Shahaji's Pune *jagir* is developed by Shivaji and Jija Bai under the guidance of Dadaji Kondadeo.

1647	Shivaji starts taking over nearby forts in the Adilshahi kingdom, which originally belonged to the Nizamshahi. Raja Shahaji is arrested by the Adilshah.
1649	Shivaji's first battle and first victory against the Adilshahi at Purandar. Shivaji surrenders Kondana fort to release his father from the Adilshahi.
1654	Shivaji's older brother Sambhaji is killed in a battle.
1656	Shivaji attacks Javali and wins his first battle of expansion. Mughal Prince Aurangzeb attacks Hyderabad (the Adilshahi capital). Mohammad Adil Shah passes away. His son Ali Adil Shah becomes the king of Adilshahi and rules the Sultanate under the guidance of his mother, Badi Sahiba.
1657	Shivaji's first son Sambhaji is born. Shivaji and his forces enter the Konkan, taking over several forts that originally belonged to the Nizamshahi. Shivaji initiates ship-building activity; birth of the Maratha navy. A lifelong battle with the Siddis of Jangira ensues. Post Aurangzeb's invasion of the Adilshahi Sultanate, once again a Mughal-Adilshahi treaty is signed. The 1636 treaty is no longer valid.
1658	Shivaji moves residence to Rajgad. Shah Jahan falls ill. Aurangzeb leaves for the north and wins the war of succession.

1659	Shivaji kills Afzal Khan at Pratapgad. The Marathas attack the Adilshahi Sultanate. Aurangzeb is now the Mughal Emperor.
1660	Baji Prabhu Deshpande dies a martyr's death while trying to help Shivaji escape from Panhala fort.
1663	Shivaji's midnight attack on Shaista Khan at Lal Mahal.
1664	Shahaji, Shivaji's father, passes away.
1665	The Purandar Peace Treaty is signed between Shivaji and Mirza Raja Jai Singh. In the Mughal-Adilshahi war, Shivaji fights along with the Mughals.
1666	Shivaji visits Agra, mysteriously escapes after being kept prisoner. Shah Jahan passes away.
1670	Shivaji's second son, Raja Ram is born. Shivaji's brave general, Tanaji Malusare is killed at Sinhagad.
1671-73	Shivaji declares war with the Mughals and the Adilshahi. Ali Adil Shah passes away at a young age. His young son Sikandar becomes the king.
1674	Shivaji's coronation takes place at Raigad. He is now the Chhatrapati of the Maratha kingdom and Raigad is the capital. The Mughal-Adilshahi Treaty to eliminate Shivaji is signed.

1676	A Mughal-Maratha treaty is signed. Shivaji signs a treaty with the Qutbshahi in the Karnataka campaign.
1678	Shivaji's son Sambhaji joins the Mughals.

Editor's Note

Centuries march on as humankind evolves – all through the agricultural age, industrial age, nuclear age, digital age, and the imminent artificial intelligence age. Although we stand at the frontiers of unprecedented technological breakthroughs, we still carry the collective scars of history. We fight the same wars but with new weapons, make the same mistakes but explain those in new jargon. The more things have changed, the more they have remained the same.

It is hardly easy to make sense of our present, everything happening around us in the now, let alone things that happened over 400 years ago. Our progress, our innovations and our advances across sectors motivate us to immerse ourselves in the present and look towards the future. And yet, here we are, learning and re-learning events from a distant past. Why, you might ask? It is because if we are to truly move forward, we must first understand who we are – a result of our past – and how we are going to move forward – by using relevant lessons learnt from our past and applying them to our present.

However, as Ashwin Sanghi (Ray, 2016), renowned historical fiction writer puts it, 'The problem with history is that it is political'. Essentially, what we 'learn' and understand as our past has a lot to do with who provides that information. It is nearly impossible to objectively understand our history because our brains are wired in such a way that we file information by associating feelings with them. This is why, even memories of our own past – experiences we

have personally lived through – are tainted based on our emotional state associated with them. It is normal human behaviour. Is there no such thing as 'the absolute truth' then?

Unfortunately, there isn't. Fortunately though, what we need isn't the absolute truth. For instance, what weapon Shivaji really used to kill Afzal Khan is a small detail of the story. Maybe they weren't tiger claws. Maybe it was a dagger. Maybe it was an extremely futuristic weapon but no one could really describe its mechanism or design and so it was simplified for mass understanding to a simple weapon like tiger claws. The point, however, remains that Afzal Khan was defeated on that fateful day and Shivaji secured yet another victory for his people. What Shivaji also manages to do is show us how one must be as cunning as one's enemy to defeat them at their game. Afzal Khan wasn't going to live up to his promise of coming to the meeting unarmed. Shivaji's victory came from not underestimating Afzal Khan. Afzal Khan's downfall was underestimating Shivaji.

Shivaji fought for his people, for reclaiming the rights of his people, for *swaraj*. One might argue though that there is no such thing as a selfless good deed. However, his mission had its foundation in the same problems he faced himself. The man isn't here to tell us what really motivated him and his actions but it is clear that he did have the vision to understand the depth of the issues – that he and his people were being exploited, their rights were being threatened, and ultimately they were leading a second-rate life; it was high time they stopped taking this lying down.

Shivaji did not have a personal vendetta against Aurangzeb. And let us also give that benefit to Aurangzeb – Aurangzeb may not have had a personal vendetta against Shivaji either. At the most basic level, their fight was about what they each represented. For Aurangzeb, Shivaji was in the way of absolute power over a territory and for Shivaij, Aurangzeb was a bully who needed to learn that one couldn't just do what one pleases without thinking about the consequences

of one's actions. This fight – a fight that lasted for 27 long years even after Shivaji's death and ended in the Marathas winning a centuries-old civilizational war – is a prime example of the human potential and what we can achieve with the right cause.

Shivaji's strength – and Aurangzeb's weakness – lies in their respective leadership qualities and management styles. Shivaji was the kind of leader who inspired his subordinates to become leaders themselves. Though Shivaji was not an economist, he zeroed in on the root cause of economic malaise in those days – the land ownership system. Replacing it with a more efficient hierarchy, centralised control over tangible and intangible resources, and enabling self-worth in his people was why they responded with such a strong sense of loyalty towards him. Shivaji believed in sharing his success with his people, and that is why his people stuck around for the failures as well. '(Shivaji) represented in himself, not only the power of the age (of those times), but the soul-stirring idea, the highest need and the highest purpose, that could animate the Marathas in a common cause. He did not create the Maratha power; that power had been already created, though scattered in small centres all over the country. He sought to unite it for a higher purpose by directing it against the common danger. This was his chief merit and his chief service to the country, and in this consists his chief claim upon the grateful remembrance of his people' (Ranade, 1974, p.17).

However, Shivaji wasn't just a visionary. He also had in him a natural instinct for strategy and military know-how. As the former head of the history division, Ministry of Defense, India, Colonel (Dr.) Anil Athale opines[53], 'Shivaji revolutionized the art of warfare in India. His policies, strategies and tactics mark a clear break from the past in the Indian context. His approach to the use of violence was radically different from the preceding thousand years. His strategic doctrine relied on swift movement and mobile defense.' Air Marshal

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[53] Personal communication on 19 May 2016

Jayal (Retd.), who was also the deputy chief of Indian Air Force adds[54], 'In many ways Shivaji actually set the basic templates on which would rest the foundations of modern militaries. His standing army belonged to the state and the responsibility for the upkeep of war horses also rested with the state. There was a centralized intelligence system and forces were mobile, engaging in commando tactics. There are lessons of innovation, strategic thought, military organization and operational planning that transcend history and time.' Moreover, achieving this vision without the assistance of modern day technology and communication is what is truly commendable.

Shivaji existed in a society that was fundamentally different from the one we live in today. He lived when religion and caste divides weren't political ammunition but were an important part of people's lives and their identities. Caste and class divides made division of labour and the functioning of society more efficient. However, when Aurangzeb began to use this to his advantage, Shivaji had to fight for the rights of his people, who happened to be Hindus, he fought against the proliferation of Islam in the country simply because it violated the basic human rights of his people; he fought for Hindustan to remain Hindustan, but without the motivations of religious orthodoxy.

According to Pradeep Rawat[55], erstwhile Member of Parliament, 'If the 17th century belonged to the Mughals, the 18th century is aptly described as the "Maratha Century" that changed the geopolitics of India forever. For the first time, a southern power stood at Panipat to protect the northern boundary of ancient India. Though the Marathas were defeated at Panipat, within a decade they regained the lord-ship of Northern India. The transfer of power in the 19th century was essentially from the Marathas to the British and not from the Mughals to the British. Modern India owes its very

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54 Personal communication on 23 May 2016

55 Personal communication on 3 June 2016

existence to Shivaji. In fact, it is Shivaji who has empowered us to choose a secular constitution. Our modern destiny is the testimony of Shivaji's legacy.'

Reducing Shivaji to a symbol of regional power, or merely a crusader would be an insult to his struggle, his ideology, and his vision. His story is much bigger than that. If he were alive today, I believe Shivaji would have fought for the rights of every Indian – not just for a particular region. He would fight against anything that would threaten the right of any Indian to be who they want to be. He would fight for India to actually become what it aspires to be – a truly ideal, inclusive democracy that values and celebrates the differences in its populace. And if there is one, let this be his legacy.

Niyati Joshi
9 June 2016

About The Author

Medha Deshmukh Bhaskaran's passion for the Mughal Maratha history began when she started writing a historical novel. The first part of this trilogy, *Frontiers of Karma – the Counterstroke*, set against the backdrop of the war between Shivaji and Aurangzeb was published in August 2014. The second book in her trilogy, *The Stratagem*, will soon be out. A microbiologist by profession, she has worked extensively for the pharmaceutical industry in India, Europe and the Middle East. For several years, she was also a health columnist for *Khaleej Times*, in Dubai. Now relocated to India, she is a full-time writer.

You can get in touch with her on Twitter by using @MedhaDB, on Facebook through her page 'Medha Deshmukh-Bhaskaran'. You can write to her at challengingdestiny2016@gmail.com.

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